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CASE FOR THE PROSECUTION

Books by H. G. Castle

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CASE FOR THE PROSECUTION

By
H. G. Castle



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CONTENTS

| | PAGE |
|----------------------------------|------|
| AUTHOR'S PREFACE | vii |
| CHAPTER | |
| 1 PLAIN CLOTHES MAN | 1 |
| 2 CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION | 18 |
| 3 DESK DETECTIVES | 25 |
| 4 FINDING OUT BY FINGERPRINTS | 36 |
| 5 SOMETHING FROM NOTHING | 45 |
| 6 SOLVED BY SCIENCE | 57 |
| 7 HIDDEN CLUES | 65 |
| 8 THE FLYING SQUAD | 71 |
| 9 SHADOWS IN THE BACKGROUND | 81 |
| 10 SPECIAL BRANCH | 89 |
| 11 ANARCHISTS AND ASSASSINS | 95 |
| 12 SABOTAGE AND ESPIONAGE | 104 |
| 13 HANDCUFFS ACROSS THE SEA | 116 |
| 14 TRACKING THE DRUG TRAFFICKERS | 123 |
| 15 THE VICE SQUAD | 130 |
| 16 FALSE PRETENCES | 136 |
| 17 THE MASTER SWINDLER | 151 |
| 18 AT THE SCENE OF THE CRIME | 159 |
| 19 THE BODY IN THE BUSHES | 166 |
| 20 A GREAT TRADITION | 172 |

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Facing page

| | | |
|--------|--|-----|
| 1 | The "Wanted" Section of the Records Branch. | 20 |
| 2 | The Statistics Branch. | 20 |
| 3 | Checking Fingerprints on a stolen car. | 21 |
| 4 | The Fingerprint Filing Room. | 21 |
| 5 | Mobile Darkroom in use. | 52 |
| 6 | Searching the River Avon for clues after a murder. | 52 |
| 7 & 8 | Detailed examination of clues. | 53 |
| 9 & 10 | The search for clues. | 116 |
| 11 | Conference at Epsom. | 117 |
| 12 | Cardiff shop murder. | 148 |
| 13 | South Hill Park murder. Detectives search garden. | 149 |

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

WHEN a layman writes about crime, criminals, and criminology he generally begins by asking the assistance of the police. Almost invariably he is given all the help he requires, sees for himself how the various branches of a force work, and often ends up with having enough material for two books. I, too, have worked with the police, mostly in my professional capacity of writer, editor, and publisher, and I am indebted to a number of police officers throughout Britain for much of the material in this book. My introduction to crime began, however, less conventionally, with a first-hand acquaintance with one of the arch-criminals of our time. He was known as Netley Lucas, alias Evelyn Graham and half a dozen other names. Like so many of his kind he was a specialist, but he differed from most of his fellow crooks in that he was a skilled specialist in several types of crime. He was a forger, a card-sharper, a confidence trickster, a pickpocket, and a receiver of stolen property.

I met Lucas when I helped in the preparation of some of his reminiscences, and I have never forgotten that first meeting. There were four of us in a publisher's office; and when the meeting broke up, Lucas returned to each of us some personal article which he had picked from our pockets. There were a fountain pen, a gold cigarette case, and two wallets.

During the next three or four months I spent a good deal of my time with Lucas. He took me into London's underworld where, because I was in his company, I was *persona grata* in that strange world as well. I met the Sabini gang, perhaps the most savage collection of terrorists that has operated in Britain in modern times. Their particular racket was to provide "protection" to bookmakers and other racecourse inhabitants. If "protection money" was not paid, then a brutal razor-slash was the result.

The Sabini gang were utterly ruthless, required an immediate answer to their demands, retaliated with a series of quick razor slashes if the money was not forthcoming, and were even quicker at avoiding the police.

I met "Larkey" Larry, who specialized in practical jokes at fashionable parties. When the guests were almost rolling with laughter or thrown into confusion, "Larkey" swiftly removed a handbag, a wallet, or a piece of jewellery. He worked so skilfully that several years passed before people realized that it was no longer a coincidence that the ex-regular army officer was being playful just before something was stolen.

There was the dreamy-eyed, long-haired Irishman who looked as if he should have been writing poetry in his native Killarney. But instead of writing poetry he wrote obscene anonymous letters to innocent people. He followed this with a telephone call to another person saying that if he was not sent some money he would post a similar letter. He varied his tactics. Once, and for all I know he did this several times, he wrote a series of anonymous letters to a number of people in a prosperous suburb. As with so many letters of this nature, some of the recipients believed what was said about their neighbours. Having sown suspicion and mistrust throughout the district, the gentleman from Killarney would telephone another potential victim and say that unless she paid (his victims were always women) he would send a letter about her. So diabolical had his campaign become that the wretched woman sent her money by return of post to an accommodation address. It was a long time before anyone had the courage to go to the police, and I once asked the Irishman if he had not been afraid that this would have happened earlier.

"It was bad luck, I tell you, that I was ever caught at all," he said. "Most people are more afraid of what the neighbours will say than of any sin they've committed, especially if ye've got Mrs. O'Hara peeping behind her curtains to see what Rory Malony is up to."

Nothing that the great Damon Runyon invented could match some of the characters I met. But there were others who were shabby, squalid, mean, and vicious, with no redeeming feature.

All of them had one thing in common, that they were on the wrong side of the law. Contrary to what many detective and thriller writers put in their books, very few of the men and women I met were in hiding from the police, although they found it discreet to disappear every now and then; scarcely any of them worked in secret hide-outs or thieves' kitchens. They went about their business of stealing, corrupting, thuggery, forgery, and then returned to their usual haunts—cafés, bars, restaurants, where the police could find them, and where they frequently came to check on someone's movements.

I learnt then, what I have seen confirmed many times since, that the underworld attitude to the police was rarely one of violence or vengeance. Enmity as such was comparatively rare. Every trick that could be used to deceive, mislead, or hoodwink the C.I.D. was used, but there were not many grumbles when the police produced a few tricks of their own. Once, some years after I knew Netley Lucas, I saw a veteran crook after he had been sentenced at the Brighton Quarter Sessions.

"That copper twisted me," he said bitterly. "Brought up his fancy witnesses who swore black was ruddy blue. I wouldn't have minded that, if only I'd *done* the job."

In the cafés, bars, and other criminal haunts to which Netley Lucas introduced me the crooks would discuss the probable police tactics when some spectacular robbery or hold-up was the talk of the day. They would nearly always know which C.I.D. detective would be in charge of the case, calculate what time he would probably be around, what questions he would ask, how much he would really know, and how much he would pretend to know.

At no time during my association with Lucas was I ever in the position of having information which was unknown to the police. No great coups were planned or discussed in my presence, so that I was never in the embarrassing position of being a law-abiding citizen who knew something which he had no business to know.

It was my experience with Netley Lucas that gave me a lifelong interest in crime, criminology, and police work. In sharp contrast I was on the other side of the fence nearly a year later when I was associated with a retired Detective Inspector in the writing of his

reminiscences, and by a coincidence he had investigated some of Lucas's misdeeds. In his company I saw at first-hand the entire Metropolitan Police organization at work.

The General Strike of 1926 took me into the Brighton Borough Police Force as a special constable. I continued to serve for some months after the strike, carrying out night beat-work at week-ends. Among the many good friends I made at that time were several officers who had dealt with the Sabini gang, which had been particularly active in Brighton, especially when the race meetings were on.

A very different type of experience came during the war when I went to Greece with the Royal Sussex Regiment in 1944 for the civil war. When that bitter, blood-stained affair was over, I worked in Salonika with the Special Investigation Branch (S.I.B.) of the Army, the personnel of which were composed mostly of British police officers. But the services of that valuable body of men were not available to me when I was sent to the interior, in Eastern Macedonia, to carry out special security and intelligence duties on the Yugoslav and Bulgarian frontiers. In the Communist-dominated town of Kilkis I was in charge of the anti-Communist police, with the unenviable task of trying to keep both factions from each other's throats.

Farther east, near Bulgaria, I investigated more than a score of murders or suspected murders. Here, in that wild, desolate, ruggedly-mountainous area, there were no police or detectives. Death by violence—stabbing, crude hanging, shooting—had to be inquired into immediately to try to prevent the assassins from escaping across the frontier or into some remote mountain hide-out. Greek was killing Greek, and the Bulgars, angry because they had been forced to return to their native territory, raided over the frontiers to maintain a reign of terror and to take vengeance on the luckless Greeks and Macedonians who had reoccupied the border villages. If they did not come to murder, the Bulgars came by night to kidnap, or on petty espionage missions to obtain information about the size, strength, and disposition of the Security forces.

During the past few years I have been connected professionally

with several books on crime, criminology, and detection. Travel in various parts of Europe has given me an insight into the methods of various international police forces and their criminal investigation methods.

And in the thirty years or so since I became interested in crime and detection I have seen the police everywhere expand, not in numbers, but into a highly-skilled, scientifically-equipped force. As a writer, editor, and publisher I have been given unusual opportunities to watch this force at work, to see its methods, to meet its officers.

As my fellow-writer, the late Bernard Wicksteed, used to say, "It's been fun finding out."

I hope that some of this fun, enjoyment, and interest will be shared in this book.

1

PLAIN CLOTHES MAN

IN a North Country city all available detectives and plain clothes policemen walked along every street and knocked on every door in an area of a square mile. Somewhere in that district of flats and houses there was a small but decisive clue to a hold-up and robbery which had taken place in London, 250 miles away. But before they found the clue, the police had to find a man. He was a suspect, but at that stage of investigation, as always in such cases, he was officially described as "someone who may be able to help the police in their inquiries". Or, as another official phrase has it: "The police are anxious to interview a man answering to the following description. . . ."

Normal duty hours were forgotten. As every door was opened to a policeman's knock, the same warrant card was shown, and the same words were spoken. "I am a police officer. I am making some inquiries. Can you tell me . . .?"

In every house in every street the result was the same. No one, apparently, knew anything. And then a chance word led a plain clothes man to another address where the suspect was reported to have been seen an hour earlier. He knocked on yet another door. A woman opened it, and the warrant card was shown. "I am a police officer," he said, for the twentieth time that day. "I am making some inquiries. . . ."

He described the man who was believed to have been at this address. No, the woman said, she did not know anyone of that description, and if anyone had called there that afternoon she had been out anyway.

"What time," the plain clothes man asked, "did you return?"

"Ten minutes ago."

"Has anyone else been in here while you were out?"

"No," she replied.

"Well," he persisted, "mind if I have a look round?"

The woman could have objected, for unless he has the occupier's permission, a policeman may not enter or search a house without a signed warrant giving him authority to do so. There are certain exceptions to this, but as a general principle this warrant is essential; thus private property cannot be summarily entered and searched.

Having obtained permission he went straight to the bathroom. When he had been talking to her on the step he had glanced along the hall into the bathroom, the door of which was open. The mirror over the basin was steamy and damp with moisture, and condensation had caused water to run down the walls. Someone had taken a bath. It might, of course, have been the woman; but if she had returned only ten minutes earlier, it was hardly likely, he thought, that she could have done it in such a short time. Either she had had the bath some time earlier, and had lied about her movements, or someone else had used the bathroom. In that event, she had also lied.

Under swift, penetrating questioning the woman admitted she was lying. For what she described as "private reasons", she had not wanted anyone to know that her brother-in-law had been there. Under further questioning she volunteered an address, and another detective was raced off in a police car to interview a man who "answered to the following description . . .".

But the man denied that he knew anything about the crime. Asked to explain his movements over the last few days, he said he had been working for a friend in this city, 250 miles from the scene of the crime.

"Working where?" the detective asked.

"In a garage."

"Doing what?"

"Repairs. A bit of mechanical work."

"You a mechanic by trade?"

"Well, in a way. I do a bit. Odd jobs."

The detective looked at the man's smooth and well-kept hands. No mechanic, he decided, ever had hands like those. So, without more ado, he invited him to go to the police station.

Two months later he was given a long sentence for his part in the hold-up and robbery.

* * * *

A great many things took place, and a number of departments of Scotland Yard collaborated with the provincial police before this man and his accomplices were brought to justice. A Chief Detective Inspector was in charge of the case, and, although he received the credit and publicity, he knew that he could not have succeeded but for the alertness and detail work of the ordinary detectives and plain clothes men. More than twenty years earlier he, too, had carried out patient investigations to enable senior C.I.D. officers to bring criminals to justice. Doubtless, too, he had never forgotten his first independent assignment as a detective constable.

As a result of a series of petty money thefts in an office he had been sent to make inquiries among the staff. There was no doubt that an employee was the culprit, but despite a searching investigation he had failed to find the thief.

Three years later he was sent to investigate a series of thefts in another firm. These were on a larger scale and involved missing merchandise from a warehouse. But once again his inquiries failed to produce a result. Then something made him turn up his old notebook which contained references to the smaller thefts three years previously. And there he found a reference to one of the people he had questioned on that occasion. A note beside the man's name indicated that he had a habit of persistently rubbing his left hand across his left eyebrow. A man of the same name was in the office where he was investigating the warehouse thefts and he, too, persistently rubbed the fingers of his left hand across his left eyebrow.

There was nothing else to connect the two crimes; it might have been just coincidence that a man with the same name and the same peculiar characteristic should have been in two different places where thefts had occurred. But he passed on the information to his Inspector, and a close watch was set on the suspect. Eventually he was arrested and subsequently sentenced for his

part as the ringleader in an extensive series of thefts from the warehouse.

* * * *

The plain clothes man had begun, as all detectives must begin, as a uniformed constable on the beat. In Britain no one is ever recruited directly into the detective branch. I once asked a Chief Inspector of the Metropolitan Police Detective Training School what he considered were the qualities which made a successful detective.

"He must work hard," he replied, "be persistent, alert, intelligent, a good mixer who is at home with dukes or dustmen alike, and a sure judge of human nature. He must have a nose for crime. He must not be a clock-watcher, for when he is engaged on a case everything else has to go—regular meals, sleep, wife, home, hobbies, and the rest—until the job is finished. And he must be as good as his information."

In the main, these are also the qualities of a good uniformed policeman, and every effort is made to inculcate them at the police school which all recruits attend. At London's Metropolitan Police School the newly-joined constable learns a great variety of subjects, and during his fourteen weeks at the school he takes three examinations, after which he is posted to one of the Force's twenty-three Divisions. After a further six months he must pass another examination, and then the Final to complete his fifteen months' probationary service.

During this probationary service he spends some of his time with different branches of the Force, but it is only when this training is completed that he is allowed to consider joining one of the specialist branches. If he chooses the C.I.D., and is approved by his Divisional C.I.D. Chief, he is attached as an "Aid to C.I.D.", and he then begins another trial period which lasts for about a year. Mostly his work during this period will be confined to routine inquiries into petty thefts and minor crime.

To the man who is determined to be a detective, even this routine work is always interesting. Occasionally, too, it can be exciting, especially if he is fortunate enough to be a member of a

team of hunting detectives closing in on their quarry. Then it could be the humble Aid who brings in the one missing clue or piece of information needed to solve the most baffling mystery.

Real-life crimes are seldom solved by a single master-stroke carried out by a master-detective. Most crimes are solved by the patient following up of the slenderest clues, the meticulous sifting of evidence and information, the team-work of several police branches, and co-operation with the general public.

After a satisfactory probationary period, the Aid goes before a Selection Board. If he survives that exacting test, he becomes a probationary Detective Constable. This is the first step on the long road to the day when he will become a real detective. This probationary period lasts for yet another year, during which time he will attend a Detective Training School for a special ten or twelve weeks' course. But even the most intensive and thorough training at the School cannot do more than teach him *how* to be a detective. It is only by practical experience that he learns to tell, for instance, the difference between a true and a false alibi, or to project himself into the prisoner's place and forecast what his next move might be.

Again, no school can provide a detective with his private contacts, many of them informers from the underworld. A detective's contacts are very much his own business, and he rarely reveals them to anyone. The phrase "from information received" hides many secrets which it would be indiscreet to reveal. When the Chief Inspector at the Metropolitan Police Training School told me that a detective was as good as his information, he meant that he must have good contacts with the underworld.

An informer is a necessary evil in detection, and no one pretends that the system of employing a "nark" is anything but unsavoury. Without it, however, many of the most important crimes would remain unsolved. Every experienced detective has his own informers, most of whom are small-time crooks who have been in prison. They pick up information about proposed crimes, or, perhaps, the whereabouts of wanted persons, and for very small rewards pass this information to the detective with whom they are in contact. Money is available for a detective to pay his own informers.

It is rare for a detective to be double-crossed by an informer, or, if he is experienced, to be misled by the information received. The informer knows that in no circumstances will the detective reveal the source of his "information received". Most of this information, given as cryptically as possible over the telephone, has a limited value. Every judge, magistrate, clerk of the court, or barrister knows what a detective means when he says "from information received", and that it would be useless to try to make him say how he obtained it. But for this very reason, the informer's information is of more value to bring a case to court rather than for use as evidence in the court itself. There it is only hearsay evidence which would not survive cross-examination by counsel or solicitor.

Obviously a detective must be discreet, tactful, and circumspect about his contacts. Not only must the informer be protected from the underworld because of his association with the police—for a life of terror can follow for the "copper's nark" who is found out—but a detective, too, must be like Caesar's wife, above suspicion. Obviously, his association with crooks and informers must lay him open to suspicion and accusation. For example, some years ago, certain Metropolitan Police officers were found to be accepting bribes from people in the West End of London. It was known by senior officers at the Yard that the detectives concerned had these contacts, but they believed them to be the usual liaison with informers.

A public scandal followed the discovery that these detectives were that very rare example of policemen who had betrayed a trust. As a result of this particular case much stricter rules were made for Metropolitan Police detectives, the effect of which was to limit their movements with the underworld. There is no doubt that these restrictions have proved a considerable handicap for the honest, conscientious detective. To-day, then, the informer system is still used, but on a much more limited scale.

* * * *

The three most important factors in the investigation of crime are: Information, Observation, and Interrogation.

In a stage play shown in London some years ago a detective was asked by a suspect if he believed his statement.

"I'm not in the believing business," the detective replied.

This sums up the manner in which a detective handles information. The first lesson he learns is that of treating all information with suspicion. This applies not only to the statements of alibis or suspects but also to information from witnesses to a crime, or from people who say they know something about it.

Real-life crimes are used at one police school to show detectives how to deal with information, how to test its accuracy, and the proper way to handle witnesses. One such crime is known as the Case of the Shopping Street Murder.

A man was shot dead in a crowded shopping street, and a large number of people saw it happen. The detectives who arrived at the scene of the crime took twenty-three statements from people who claimed to have been eye-witnesses. The one vital point which the detectives wished to establish from these statements was a definite clue as to the identity of the man who had fired the fatal shot. But the twenty-three statements produced twenty-three different descriptions. From these no accurate picture of the wanted man could be created. The police then appealed to anyone who might have information, no matter how apparently unimportant. As a result, a large number of people came forward, and many more statements were taken. There is often a very big response to this type of appeal. Some people have information which they honestly think might be useful; others are amateur detectives who merely want to tell the C.I.D. how to do their job; while there are those who feel that this is an opportunity to get behind the scenes of a real crime.

At this stage of the examination of the case at the Detective School the pupils learn two lessons: the first, the necessity of checking or verifying facts in each statement and the weighing of all the statements against each other; the second, the importance of judging the value of a witness's information. Failure to do this results in a waste of time which might prove fatal in tracking the wanted man.

The experienced detective, with his wide experience of human

nature, can judge the value of most information by the type of people who give it. The know-all, the sensation-seeker, or the men or women with hearsay information are fairly easy to recognize.

Despite extensive inquiries and the taking and checking of numerous statements, ten days passed without any progress having been made in the Shopping Street Murder. And then a man gave some information which he thought might be useful. As a result, the police began an entirely new line of inquiry which subsequently led to an arrest and conviction. This was the basis of another lesson for the probationer detectives who were studying the case. Often information which is given some time after a crime has been committed may be more accurate than that which is received when the police first arrive at the scene. The people concerned have had an opportunity to think about it and consider exactly what they did see. And these late-comers are usually cautious, peaceable, responsible citizens who do not really want to be involved with crime and the police.

The checking of information and the testing of its accuracy, then, is essential to the bringing of criminals to justice. A detective soon learns that once he has brought his man to court, every fact and every statement will be examined and disputed there.

A great deal of inaccurate information is the result of poor observation, and to help in this the would-be detective takes part in an intensive series of observation tests at the School. A typical test showed a photograph of the back of a house. After five minutes' examination, the following questions were set: What time of the year is suggested, and why?—Describe the ladder—Give approximate height of dividing wooden fence—Describe the ground-floor window—How many water tanks were there?—Which two of the following six articles were in the yard: lawn-mower, yard-broom, watering can, pail, sack, shovel. Was there anything on the stool under the scullery window?—Was the scullery roof tiled or slated?—Had it been raining? give reasons for your answer.

I once sat in at one of these classes for detectives when a visitor was unexpectedly shown round. He spent about ten minutes in the room, and after he left we were told to write a description of him in the form of a WANTED FOR MURDER notice. The details required

were approximate age, height, build, colour of hair and eyes, description of clothes and footwear, and any "special physical peculiarities or distinguishing marks". This sort of test is difficult enough when one is prepared for it, but it is even more so as a sudden challenge.

Another particularly difficult observation test is to describe two persons who are dressed differently, but the description must be of each person wearing the other's clothes.

Once these various observation tests have been thoroughly practised, students are trained to put their powers of observation to practical use. A detective must notice every detail as soon as he arrives at the scene of the crime. He learns to notice, for example, that an apparently undisturbed room has in fact been disturbed. As a result of trained observation he can tell that a piece of furniture has been moved even although an intruder was confident that he had replaced it in its original position. But the small margin of dust which was hidden before the piece of furniture was moved can show a detective all that he wants to know; the carelessly-replaced heavy chair may not have been put back exactly in the same position on the thick pile carpet, so that a minute but fresh impression shows beyond the original one made by the castors.

Articles in a room which have been moved, and the way they have been moved, can help a detective to decide whether he is dealing with an amateur or a professional. The professional works to a set plan and does everything systematically, whereas the amateur tries to do too many things at once, works too quickly and therefore carelessly. The method which a criminal uses can often be invaluable to the Criminal Record Offices, whose work is dealt with later in this book.

The object of this intensive observation training is to make a detective suspiciously alert at all times, so that it becomes a habit. Everything and everyone is looked at with a sharply trained eye.

This "watching eye" technique was partly responsible for Detective Superintendent John Capstick's success in solving the Harries Mystery in 1953.

An elderly farmer, John Harries, and his wife disappeared without trace from their Carmarthenshire farm, in Wales. The Yard's help was sought and Superintendent Capstick took charge of investigations.

A relative, Ronald Harries, told the "Man from the Yard" that the farmer and his wife had gone on holiday. Capstick, in common with the rest of his kind, was not "in the believing business", and there were several things which made him disbelieve young Harries' story.

Despite a search over a wide area, little progress was made towards a solution until the observant Capstick noticed the regular habits of a bird. It was a buzzard. It sat persistently and regularly on one tree looking steadily towards one field. Capstick looked at that field too. Then, with his Detective Sergeant, he threaded twelve lengths of cotton, at shoulder height, through the hedges which surrounded Ronald Harries' house.

Next morning the threads were broken. A trail of cotton was followed to the same field which the buzzard had watched—and was still watching. Someone, almost certainly Ronald Harries, had visited that field during the night.

The Superintendent organized a digging party, and the bodies of John Harries and his wife were found buried in the field. So carefully had the earth been rearranged that the discovery would probably never have been made but for John Capstick's observant bird-watching.

Ronald Harries was arrested and subsequently found guilty.

The third principle of investigation, interrogation, is the most difficult of the three. The detective learns to follow a certain routine or pattern, but flexibility is essential as each interrogation must be adapted to meet any new set of circumstances.

Interrogation can take several forms. There is the routine inquiry, the questioning of one or more persons who have volunteered information, and the interrogation of someone who is not a suspect but who is reluctant to talk. Finally, there is the interrogation of a suspected person either before or after he has been charged.

* * * *

As soon as he begins his training the detective learns about the Judges' Rules. These were first drafted in 1912 (and revised in 1918) by the Judges of the King's Bench Division as a result of protests about the interrogation of suspects, and accusations that Third Degree methods had been used. They are a code of rules for every policeman who interrogates a suspect, and they give protection to everyone who is charged with a crime.

The more important of these rules are:

(1) When a police officer is investigating a crime, he may question any person, whether suspected or not, from whom he thinks useful information can be obtained.

(2) Whenever a police officer has made up his mind to charge a person with a crime, he should first caution the person before asking him any questions, or any further questions, as the case may be.

(3) Persons in custody should be cautioned before being questioned.

(4) If the prisoner wishes to volunteer a statement, he should first be cautioned.

(5) The caution to a prisoner, when he is formally charged, should be: "Do you wish to say anything in answer to this charge? You are not obliged to say anything unless you wish to do so, but whatever you say will be taken down in writing, and may be used in evidence." Care should be taken to avoid making the suggestion that his answer can only be used in evidence *against* him.

(6) A statement by a prisoner before there is time to caution him is allowed in evidence, but he should be cautioned as soon as possible.

(7) A prisoner making a voluntary statement must not be cross-examined except to remove ambiguities in what he has actually said.

(8) When two or more persons are charged with the same offence, and statements are taken separately from them, the police should not read these statements to the other persons charged but should give each of them a copy of the statements

and nothing should be said to invite a reply. If a reply is volunteered, the usual caution should be given.

(9) Any statement made in accordance with these rules should, whenever possible, be taken down in writing and signed by the person making it after it has been read to him and he has been invited to make any corrections he may wish.

Even when a suspect is charged he is not bound to answer questions or make a statement, and the detective must point this out to him. It is seldom that anyone does refuse to talk, but a detective safeguards himself against such a possibility by trying to obtain as much information as he can before he makes a charge. Information gained in this way cannot, of course, be used as evidence, but, in practice, a suspect who talks freely before he is charged usually finds it difficult to keep his mouth shut even after he has been cautioned.

Behind the detective, with his lengthy training in the three basic factors of information, observation, and interrogation, stands a vast organization of crime detection with every modern scientific device at its disposal.

Throughout their training all detectives learn how to co-operate with this organization, with its forensic and scientific laboratories, its fingerprint branches, its Criminal Record Offices, and the rest of the departments which play their part in the fight against crime.

The detective can call on cameras capable of photographing an almost invisible sweat deposit, an enlargement of which may be invaluable to the Fingerprint Branch; the Metropolitan Police Branch at Scotland Yard has one and a half million sets of prints available to the inquiring detective. Ultra-violet and infra-red photography is used to detect forgeries, erased laundry marks, or numbers on stolen typewriters or the cylinder blocks of stolen cars. The Scientific Laboratory has remarkable microscopes which, used with ultra-violet lamps, can reveal bloodstains or chloroform marks on a piece of rag which are invisible to the naked eye. The Biology Laboratory can end a nation-wide man-hunt by supplying information about blood and blood-groups, tiny particles of

metal sorted out from a pile of refuse, or equally tiny particles of paint taken from the remains of a road crash.

But all the scientific wonders which are there to help him, all the vast collection of criminal records which can build up rapidly an accurate picture of a wanted man, are no substitute for "information received" and accurate observation. The information on which the laboratories work, the sketchy details sent to C.R.O., can come only from the hard, slogging, patient routine work of the C.I.D. men. Of every hundred or so cases dealt with by the Metropolitan Police C.I.D. only a few are sent to the laboratories. The rest are solved by terrier-like routine work in the Divisional area.

Although the laboratories often provide vital and sometimes decisive results, they do not by themselves solve a crime. Detectives use these results to complete their own investigations.

An outstanding example of co-operation is provided by the Kempson murder which took place at Oxford in August 1931. A 58-years-old widow, Mrs. Annie Louisa Kempson, was found battered to death in her small, semi-detached house in St. Clement Street on August Bank Holiday. Almost as soon as the discovery was made, the Chief Constable of the Oxford Constabulary telephoned the Yard and asked for C.I.D. assistance.

Within an hour Chief Inspector Horwell was on his way to Oxford, where he arrived some time after midnight. By daybreak he had sorted out the bare facts of the case. The murdered woman had been expected in London for the Bank-Holiday week-end, but she failed to arrive and her brother was asked to find out what had happened to her. On his first visit he merely found the house shut and there was no answer to his knock and ring.

On the Bank Holiday Monday, accompanied by his son, he called again. This time they forced an entry and found Annie Kempson dead in the dining-room. Her body was covered by a mat and three cushions. The house had been ransacked and this at first suggested robbery as a possible motive, but it did not explain why a considerable sum of money was intact. It was possible, of course, that the intruder had overlooked the box in which the money was kept. The dead woman shared her

house with a lodger, Miss Williams, who was away for the Bank Holiday.

This was all that Chief Inspector Horwell, who was in charge of the case, knew by daybreak the following morning. He did not waste any time. He put detectives and uniformed police on house-to-house inquiries, and telephoned the famous pathologist, Sir Bernard Spilsbury, who was then at the height of his world-wide reputation. Chief Inspector Horwell was anxious to discover how the fatal blows had been delivered, by what type of instrument, and—if it were possible—by what type of person. He also wanted to establish fairly accurately the time of death.

There was some evidence to indicate the time of death before Sir Bernard Spilsbury carried out his post-mortem examination, but Horwell hoped that the pathologist could be more precise. This would help the detectives to match or confirm any eye-witness evidence of suspected people who may have been seen in the neighbourhood.

The Chief Inspector estimated that the woman had probably been murdered on the Saturday morning, two days before the body was found. According to information given by Miss Williams, Annie Kempson had been wearing a black frock on the Saturday morning. She was still wearing that frock when her body was found. Miss Williams had left for her visit on that morning, and Mrs. Kempson had also planned to go away on the same day. When Miss Williams had left, her landlady had not yet had her breakfast, but in the kitchen were a cup and saucer, a plate, bread and butter, and the remains of some egg custard. Nothing, including the previous evening's supper dishes, had been cleared away or washed up, and upstairs, Mrs. Kempson's bed was unmade.

The significance of all this was that Annie Kempson was known to be a tidy, methodical woman whose daily routine never varied. The evidence suggested that something, or someone, had interrupted that routine.

Sir Bernard Spilsbury carried out his post-mortem a few hours after the Chief Inspector had telephoned him. His examination of

the contents of the stomach confirmed the evidence in the kitchen about her breakfast.

In the meantime the police were active in Oxford. A man was reported to have been seen at Mrs. Kempson's front door at about ten o'clock on the Saturday morning. The detectives pressed home their inquiries which grew like a snowball until the man developed into an identifiable person. Further evidence suggested that he was someone who had been selling vacuum cleaners in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, and had in fact sold one recently to Mrs. Kempson.

There was literally no rest for Chief Inspector Horwell and his team. The vacuum cleaner salesman was identified as Henry Daniel Seymour. A rapid check with the Yard's Criminal Record Office—whose work is the subject of a later chapter—showed that he had eleven previous convictions. Among these convictions was one for unlawful wounding. But that was not all. The charge for which he had been convicted had been reduced from one of attempted murder. The person he had tried to murder had been a woman who was in a house alone.

Although Seymour lived in Oxford with his wife, he was missing from that address when the police inquired there. But evidence of his recent movements began to build up a complete picture. This was not achieved, however, without the hard, patient slogging, the routine inquiries. It was established that a day or two before Mrs. Kempson's murder Seymour had stayed at an Aylesbury hotel, which he had left on the Bank Holiday Friday without paying his bill or taking his suitcase with him. That same afternoon he had called on a woman to whom he had previously sold a vacuum cleaner. He told her that he had lost his money, and she had lent him a few shillings. With that money he went to an ironmonger's shop and bought a hammer and chisel.

While this intensive work went on, Sir Bernard Spilsbury was completing and confirming his post-mortem examination. The injuries had been caused in the first place by a series of savage blows from a heavy instrument. The first blow had been made from behind her, and the victim had had no opportunity to defend herself. According to Sir Bernard this attack had been carried out

in the hall of the house, but it had not killed her. The murderer had then dragged her to the dining-room, where he had stabbed her through the neck with a sharp instrument, and killed her.

A blunt instrument and a sharp instrument. . . . A hammer was blunt, a chisel was sharp. And Henry Daniel Seymour had bought both.

And after he had bought them, he had returned to the woman who had lent him the money. He told her that he had missed his last bus, and she and her husband put him up for the night.

The following morning someone "answering to his description" had been seen at Annie Kempson's front door. In the afternoon, Seymour had returned to the Aylesbury hotel, made his way back to the room which he had left unpaid for—and was discovered there by the management. He said that he had come for his razor, which was in his suitcase. He had then left the hotel, but because his bill was still unsettled the suitcase remained in the room.

When he opened it, Chief Inspector Horwell found a hammer and a chisel . . . a blunt instrument and a sharp instrument. A maker's label had been removed from the hammer which, with the chisel, had been thoroughly cleaned. The Chief Inspector held up the case and shook it. Several small, screwed-up pieces of paper fell out.

The hammer and chisel were given to Sir Bernard Spilsbury. The small pieces of paper were chemically treated with drops of water. As if in the hands of a magician, they unfolded to reveal sufficient to identify the manufacturer's name, and thus enabled the iron-monger to identify the hammer as being the one he had sold to Seymour.

Sir Bernard Spilsbury was not so fortunate with his preliminary tests. The head of the hammer was slightly smaller than the blows which had left their tragic mark on Annie Kempson. He thought it possible, however, that the head of the hammer had been covered with material. He carried out several tests with materials of different thicknesses until he found one such test that made the hammer-head fit exactly with the depth and size of the blows.

But still the tests were not conclusive, not at any rate for the exactingly precise pathologist. He examined the hammer under

his microscope. And there, invisible to the human eye, were minute pieces of material which had defied Seymour's attempts to remove all traces and clues.

Meanwhile, Chief Inspector Horwell had not finished with the hotel bedroom. He examined every inch and every article in it. He held up a blotting pad before a mirror, and there he saw an address at Brighton.

There had, of course, been other guests in the bedroom, and it may not have been Seymour who had left that address. The Chief Inspector put through a telephone call to Brighton. Would the police make a routine check at that address? The Brighton police would and did, and there they found Seymour staying under an assumed name. He knew the landlady as he had stayed there before.

She was a widow who lived alone.

Seymour had a room above her own. With yet another chisel he had bored two holes in the floor so that he could observe her movements and discover, too, just where she kept the money which he knew she had. But because of the Chief Inspector's astuteness, and attention to detail, the landlady lived. Seymour it was who died when he was later found guilty of the murder of Annie Louisa Kempson.

CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION

EVERY police force in Britain has its Criminal Investigation Department, and the initials "C.I.D." are among the best known in the English-speaking world. These Departments range in size from the small units, where uniformed policemen may have to change into plain clothes to reinforce the regular C.I.D., to the 700-mile area of London's Metropolitan C.I.D., with Scotland Yard as its headquarters.

In many detective novels Scotland Yard is always sending C.I.D. officers all over the country to investigate crimes, and particularly those of murder. But it is unusual for the Yard to investigate a crime outside its own Metropolitan Police area. Even within that area it does not interfere with the work of the twenty-three Divisions, or the 1400 members of the C.I.D., most of whom are not attached to the Yard at all.

These Divisions are divided into four Districts, each of which has a Chief Superintendent, C.I.D., who is responsible for the detective work in his area. If a case is beyond the resources of any particular Division, or there are special circumstances connected with it, the co-operation of one or other of the Yard's own branches of the C.I.D. is sought.

Apart from the Special Branch and the Scientific Laboratory there are eight branches of the Metropolitan Police Criminal Investigation Department. C. 1, or Central Office, is the Yard's crime-fighting unit; C. 2 deals with documents relating to crime and suspected crime, except those which are the responsibility of C. 3, C. 4, and the Special Branch; C. 3 is the Fingerprint Branch; C. 4 the Criminal Record Office; C. 5 is Administration; C. 6 is the Fraud Squad; C. 7 is the Detective Training School; and C. 8 is the Flying Squad.

Even in a serious crime, such as murder, unless there are very

special reasons, its investigation is controlled by the Divisional Chief Superintendent in whose area it has occurred. He has as his deputy a Divisional Detective Inspector, or D.D.I. Because a Divisional Chief Superintendent is sometimes, but wrongly, referred to as one of Scotland Yard's "Big Five", the public often believe that the Yard plays a direct part in every London murder, bank robbery, hold-up, or other type of serious crime.

Actually it is the four District Chief Superintendents together with the Chief Superintendent of the Central Office who form the Big Five of the Metropolitan Police C.I.D., but only the latter works at the Yard. It frequently happens, of course, that circumstances make it necessary for one or more of the Yard's own branches to co-operate with a Divisional C.I.D. on a major case. It may be a crime, for instance, which requires investigation over a wide area, including several of the twenty-three Divisions, or if it is an unusual case with special difficulties, then the Yard's own C.I.D. might take charge of the investigations. For the most part, however, all crime in each Division is the responsibility of the D.D.I., who is normally expected to deal with it on his own.

The Central Office staff, in addition to a Chief Superintendent, consists of fourteen Chief Inspectors, four Detective Inspectors, as well as a number of first- and second-class Detective Sergeants and Detective Constables. It is from this staff that officers are supplied when the provincial police "Call in the Yard". Then one of the Central Office's most famous Detective Superintendents, such as John Capstick, Reginald Spooner or Colin MacDougall, leads a team of skilled, special investigators.

In many detective stories "the Man from the Yard" is sometimes on holiday or happens to be in the neighbourhood when a murder or other crime is committed. He is asked to take charge of the investigation. This could never happen in real life.

When a crime has been committed outside the Metropolitan area it is the local Chief Constable who decides to call in the Yard. He cannot call upon anybody who happens to be in the neighbourhood, and neither can he telephone any Scotland Yard detective who may be a friend of his, or who he thinks might have specialized knowledge of the crime with which he is concerned. He does, of

course, telephone the Yard, but only to set in motion a routine for dealing with requests for outside help. In normal duty hours the Deputy Chief of the C.I.D. would probably handle the request in the first instance, and then pass it on to the Superintendent in charge of the Central Office. If the call should come outside normal duty hours and is urgent, then it is dealt with by one of the Chief Detective Inspectors who is doing his turn as duty officer.

From the moment a request is received the routine works swiftly and efficiently. The choice of a Chief Detective Superintendent, or perhaps a Chief Inspector, to take charge of the case depends on which officer is available, and the type of crime. The Yard Superintendents and Chief Inspectors can handle most crimes, but there are occasions when expert knowledge is required. Some Yard detectives are specialists in murder or drug-trafficking, while others have had a wider experience of forgery, bank robberies, or crimes in which international crooks are involved. A Yard man's own methods may also make him a suitable choice for a particular crime.

The detective who is chosen selects a Detective Sergeant, generally one with whom he has worked before, and they go to the scene of the crime.

If it is a murder case, then the detective in charge and his Sergeant take with them one of the celebrated "Murder Bags", which are always ready for instant use. In them is all the equipments which the investigating team are likely to require. A variety of contents include special cellophane envelopes or containers to keep pieces of evidence intact; boxes for bullets; test-tubes; steel tape measures; tweezers; a screwdriver and other tools; rubber gloves; magnifying glasses; a compass; handcuffs; material for taking impressions of keys and locks; a footprint protective surround.

The Murder Bags will also contain emergency fingerprint equipment. As a rule, however, the fingerprint experts will take their own "Scene of the Crime" boxes, the equipment of which includes magnifying glasses, grey and graphite powders for the detection of what are known as latent (or hidden) prints, insufflators for blowing on the powders, a sharp-ended instrument



Photo. Sport and General

- 1 The "Wanted" Section of the Records Branch. In this section are complete records of all "Wanted" men throughout the country.

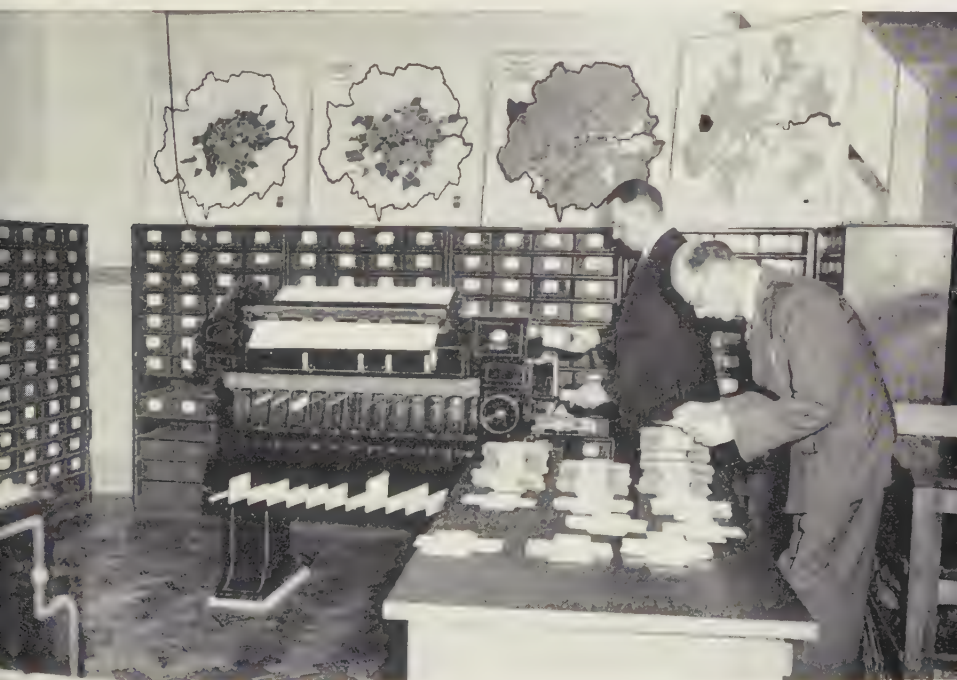


Photo. Sport and General

- 2 The Statistics Branch. Here is a three-bank printing, counting and sorting machine, which deals with 24,000 Record Cards per hour.



Photo. Keystone

3 Detectives check fingerprints on a stolen car.



Photo. Sport and General

4 A detective sergeant examines finger-print records in the main Fingerprint Filing Room.

known as a probe, as well as screwdrivers, tools, tweezers, cellophane envelopes or containers, tape measure and other equipment which is also in the Murder Bags. The provincial C.I.D.'s have their own fingerprint organizations, so the team from the Yard would not necessarily include print specialists.

A Chief Constable does not call in the Yard because the London men are necessarily more efficient than his own. There are a number of reasons which might lead him to make this decision. A particular crime may require a greater experience than is available locally, or it might be suspected as being a part of a series in which the Yard is already engaged in carrying out investigations. In these, and other instances, this unique organization can provide immediate help and information. In the smaller provincial areas where everyone is known to each other, men who are new to the district can sometimes see things from a different point of view. Moreover, the fact that the Chief Constable has called in the Yard can have an important and frightening effect on the guilty people. If they live in the district, they may feel more confident if the crime is to be investigated by George, or Charlie or Ted, who may be their neighbours or with whom they were at school. George, or Charlie or Ted, are doubtless excellent C.I.D. men, but to the guilty they do not always seem quite as first-class or as formidable as the "Man from the Yard".

Once he arrives at the scene of the crime, the Yard detective takes complete charge, but it is the local men who do that hard, slogging investigating without which few crimes can be solved.

* * * *

The first attempt to organize any sort of detective force in London was as far back as 1684. Then Thomas de Veil (known as the first detective) harried and hunted the criminals of the day from an office in a yard in Whitehall. Its name was Scotland Yard, so-called because it was on the site of a house in which the Kings and Queens of Scotland had stayed when they visited London.

To-day that site is known as Old Scotland Yard. It stands at the top of Whitehall. Near the other end of Whitehall, just half a mile

away, is New Scotland Yard, the modern home of the Metropolitan Police and the C.I.D. New Scotland Yard, as the original buildings on the Thames Embankment were known, was completed in 1890. Detectives were called in to solve a mystery in their new home before it was even ready. Excavators digging the foundations found the remains of a body. At first it was believed to be that of a woman, but investigation and extensive medical examination showed it to be the remains of a small bear, which had perhaps belonged to some long-forgotten zoo.

De Veil's first attempts to give London a force of detectives was followed by the famous Bow Street Runners, which was a more organized body. But it was not until 1842, thirteen years after Sir Robert Peel had formed the Metropolitan Police, that a detective branch was in being. It was staffed by two Inspectors and six Sergeants. One way and another it did not prove satisfactory, and especially as its secret method of working was disapproved of by the public and resented by the uniformed police as well.

Something better was obviously required, and it was a London barrister, Howard Vincent, who supplied it. Vincent had closely examined the French system of having an independent force of plain clothes detectives, and he explained it to a Committee. As a result, he was asked to organize a similar system for the Metropolitan Police. This became the Criminal Investigation Department, with Vincent himself at its head with the rank of Assistant Commissioner.

At first this new organization was no more popular than its predecessor. The public still felt that a plain clothes force engaged in secret work was too much like the police of some foreign countries, and this antipathy was shared by the uniformed Divisional Superintendents, who objected to their activities.

Howard Vincent, however, persevered with his scheme, and gradually the opposition was overcome. Reforms were made; the public was protected from any third degree, and no C.I.D. man was allowed to work in a Division without telling the uniformed Superintendent what he was doing.

To-day that still applies, with the result that, although the main

task of the uniformed branch is to prevent crime, and that of the C.I.D. to solve it, the two work together in perfect co-operation. The twenty-two D.D.I.'s are responsible not only to their Detective Superintendents but also to the uniformed Superintendent of their district.

It was some seventy-seven years ago that Howard Vincent sent out his first C.I.D. detectives. In that short time the Criminal Investigation Department of the Metropolitan Police has become the model for similar forces all over the world, and the men who work in it have achieved universal respect. They live modestly in equally modest houses, and to most people they look like men who are engaged in any normal occupation. To the ordinary citizen they could be bank managers, commercial travellers, schoolmasters or office workers. But almost every criminal or potential criminal can tell a detective at a glance.

The well-known C.I.D. men are recognizable anyway, but even the more obscure Detective Sergeants, constables, and plain clothes men are generally easily spotted, no matter how much they may try to pass themselves off as anything else.

A pickpocket once told me that he could pick out a "bogey" in any crowd. "They always give themselves away. You just watch."

I suggested that perhaps it was the way he walked, after having spent a year or so on the beat at the regulation pace.

"That's only a bit of it," he replied. "And it don't apply so much to the coppers these days. They don't do so much of the old ball of chalk now they got their cars and their bikes. And anyway some of these younger chaps know the old give-away ball of chalk and don't use it. No . . . it's the way they have a dekko round. His lamps are never still. The ordinary bloke will go among a crowd and look past it. But you watch a bogey. He gives everyone the quick once-over, just to see if there's any old chums around. It don't matter where he is. Suppose you got a ticket for a football match. In a stand, see? Well, you'll likely go to your seat and sit down. But a bogey won't. He'll hang about before he sits down, and have that quick dekko. And when he has sat down, he'll still flick his lamps about until the game begins. Sometimes I read a few 'tec books, with a load of tripe about bogeys shadowing some

geezer. That don't happen too often. If I think I'm being tailed, I just take one dekkko, and I'll spot him all right."

In 1945, when I was working with the Greek police in Salonika, another British officer came out of police headquarters as I was going in. The soldier I was with had spent most of his civilian life avoiding the police. "I bet he's a dick," he told me, as the officer passed.

I asked him if he knew him personally.

"No. But there's a dozen ways of recognizing them. Take that officer now. He had a quick peep at all them cars and trucks parked by the kerb. Just like he was back home and on the lookout for a stolen car."

The soldier was right. Later I found out that the officer was a senior Metropolitan Police detective who was serving in Greece with the Special Investigation Branch.

Although it may be easy to pick out a detective, the habit of being suspiciously alert pays off, especially when a crook cannot hide his tracks. The Criminal Record Office has two and a half million references to criminals who have "left their card", for suspiciously-alert detectives to read.

3

DESK DETECTIVES

A WOMAN returned to her London suburban house on a gloomy December afternoon to find that it had been burgled during her two hours' absence. In response to her 999 call a police car arrived, and, after a quick look around, the policeman in charge telephoned for a detective. This was the third burglary case which the crew had been called to that afternoon, and each one had similar characteristics.

When the C.I.D. man arrived he found that the house had been entered some time between the hours of three and five, that the thief had searched desk, table, and dressing-table drawers only, and that he had taken a small quantity of jewellery and about seven pounds in cash. He had broken in through a groundfloor bedroom window, having first pasted a sheet of brown paper over the glass so that there would be no noise when it was broken. This was the only window which was completely hidden by hedges, a tree, and a fence from the house next door. There were no fingerprints, and the footprints were too vague and unformed to be of any value.

This burglary bore an almost exact resemblance to the other two cases which the C.I.D. man had investigated that day, the only difference being the type of vehicle used by the burglar. In the other two cases, according to witnesses, an ordinary bicycle had been seen standing outside one of the others, while outside the other it was a tradesman's type. The detective's inquiries among properties near the third house also revealed the fact that a bicycle had been seen there by the kerb during the afternoon, but this time it was a window cleaner's machine. The local police station supplied the information that a window cleaner had reported the loss of his cycle.

With all this information in his possession the C.I.D. man put

an inquiry through to C.R.O. at the Yard. He was anxious to know if, among the two and a half million record cards, there was a record of anyone whose methods could be matched with the system of this suburban thief.

This call was but one of nearly 200,000 calls received by C.R.O. each year, all asking for information. The store of this information is the Crime Index, that monumental crooks' "Who's Who" which is increased annually by a fresh forty or fifty thousand entries. This enormous Index is sub-divided into four separate divisions—Method, Wanted, Nominal, and Cheque. As its name suggests, the Cheque Index is a record of stolen, forged, and other types of "dud" cheques; as with the other sub-divisions of the Index, it contains the names of those who specialize in particular methods.

Although the information from the suburbs could not supply any clue to the burglar's identity, it did include a considerable amount of detail of how the house was entered and the manner in which he set about his task. The C.R.O.'s search, then, would probably begin in the Method Index, with a consequent cross-check in the Wanted Index.

What, then, are the factors on which C.R.O. based this search?

First, a man who robbed suburban houses while they were temporarily unoccupied. He might, of course, be someone who does other burglaries as well, but as he had been presumed to have done three suburban burglaries in the same district, on the same day and in exactly the same manner, it was a reasonable assumption that he was a specialist. Even so, there are several thousand recorded names of thieves who specialize in daylight robberies of suburban houses which are temporarily unoccupied.

With each house he had entered, however, he had chosen the one window which could not be seen by the people next door. This was not very much of a clue, but it helped to narrow the wide area of the search. For instance, an entry which read: "Artifice used—man claiming to be a gas-meter inspector, a representative from the Borough Surveyor's Department, or someone in similar official capacity" would not necessarily be rejected out of hand. But if, as suspected, our suburban thief was a "pattern" man,

then it was unlikely that he would pretend to be from the Gas Board. In any event, the comparatively few thieves who use this method specialize in houses which are occupied, so under the "artifice used" there would not be a record of how this type of thief entered the premises, as he entered the house quite easily.

The search among the cards would then switch to other subdivisions of "artifice used". There are several thousand names of thieves who use a window or a door or some part of a house hidden from its neighbours, but the area of search in this case was still further narrowed by the fact that our thief had pasted brown paper on the window.

Once, however, check was made on how he worked inside the house, then the cards revealed a considerably smaller number of thieves who concentrated almost entirely on drawers in desks, tables, and dressing-tables, taking loose money and a small quantity of jewellery, and neglecting everything else no matter how valuable it was. So the list grew still smaller as the cards showed fewer names of thieves who entered temporarily unoccupied suburban houses by way of a well-concealed window; who arrived at the house on a stolen bicycle; who confined their search to drawers in desks, tables, and dressing-tables; who took only loose money and a small quantity of jewellery; and who selected two or three houses in a district and were never recorded as having returned there, or at least until after a long absence.

There were, in fact, no cards which fitted all these details exactly, but there were six men, and six men only, in that vast forest of names, who were likely to be the wanted man. And only three of the six had made a fairly persistent habit of arriving as sweeps, window-cleaners, door-to-door salesmen (one of the most popular artifices of all), or of some other occupation which would give them a chance to walk round the back of the house without arousing too much suspicion.

By the next morning the one man who had carried out the three thefts was traced and arrested.

* * * *

It may seem peculiar for a criminal to persist in using similar, or

even the same methods, when his "trade mark" is so well known at the Yard and in other record offices, and the fact that most crooks are not very intelligent only partly explains this. Many professional criminals specialize just as other professionals do, and have thus learnt to work quickly and efficiently. This applies particularly to the more skilled and complicated methods such as safebreaking, forgery, false pretences, and jewel-stealing. But, above all, the professional crook is vain and, fortunately for the police, he believes that he will eventually be clever enough to cover his tracks successfully.

With one exception the criminal records are maintained only for convicted persons. Details of a suspect, together with his fingerprints, may be taken on his arrest, but if the man, or woman, is acquitted, then all these details are destroyed. The exception is provided by the Wanted Index. The details here are of people who may or may not have a criminal record, or whose identity is unknown. If, for example, our suburban thief had never been convicted but had been doing the same type of burglaries, then all the details of his handiwork would be recorded in the Wanted Index until there would be a complete file except for a name. And in time he might acquire a name as a result of further information and investigation. It might not be his real name. It might be an unconfirmed name. It might be an alias. Whatever it is, it will be recorded in the Wanted Index.

The secret of C.R.O.'s success lies in the extraordinarily detailed cross-indexing system. This includes not only every type of crime committed and, as we have seen, the methods used, but there are also cards which show distinguishing marks or physical peculiarities such as squints, tattoo marks, scars, birthmarks, stammers, club-feet, protruding eyes, nicknames, and so on. Among the most interesting is the record of Characteristic Peculiarities. If a woman shoplifter, for example, makes a habit of excusing her possession of alleged stolen property by being absent-minded, then that fact is recorded under a heading *Absent-Minded*. A glance there will show that Mrs. X has used this excuse before when accused of a shoplifting offence.

Now let us examine a shoplifting inquiry received by C.R.O.

Some articles have been stolen from a store, and a woman who is seen there frequently is suspected. The store detective reports the facts to the local C.I.D., who pass on the inquiry to C.R.O. The woman was thought to be between forty and fifty years of age, smartly-dressed, dark-haired, and generally accompanied by a man of similar age. She is described as having a slightly foreign accent.

C.R.O. looked under *Shoplifting* and found *A Name*, among a mass of other names. The strongest clue was found in the deformity or physical characteristic section, under *Speech* (slight foreign accent). But there were other women shoplifters who spoke with slight foreign accents, so that clue by itself was insufficient. The *Characteristic Peculiarities* file was more revealing. The woman with *A Name*, under shoplifting, who spoke with a slight foreign accent, had two entries here. One under *A, Accompanied by a Man*, and the other under *F, Feigns Absentmindedness*. A search among her previous conviction records showed that when stopped as she was leaving a store with some goods in her possession she had pleaded absentmindedness. While she was being questioned by the store detective her husband had arrived. He explained that he had lost sight of her, showed signs of being a genuinely distracted husband, and said that she was absent-minded. The store detective, however, was unconvinced, the police had been called, and the woman was arrested and subsequently convicted and fined. But as there was no proof that her husband was an accessory he was not charged.

With this information in their possession, the C.I.D. warned the store detective to watch for her next visit. The woman in fact paid two more visits, once with a man, and once alone. On neither occasion did she behave suspiciously, but merely bought some goods in a perfectly straightforward manner.

And then she made a third visit.

This time she had a man with her. The store detective shadowed her, and saw her wander casually away from him while he was pretending to examine some books. The woman went up to a counter, looked at several articles and bought two or three. But she walked away with one for which she had not paid. She held it

quite openly in her hand and continued to walk round the store, looking at other counters, but the store detective noticed that she was gradually moving towards the doors.

When she reached them she placed the article in her hand between her handbag and her body. The store detective then stopped her as she left the shop. While the woman was trying to explain things, a man arrived, and as he began to explain that he was her husband, that she was extremely absent-minded, that he had lost sight of her in the shop, the store detective knew that it was time to send for the police.

From that moment there was no doubt about the woman's guilt, thanks to C.R.O.'s detailed indexes, and the photograph of any convicted person which is attached to every record.

This is another example of a crook keeping on with a method which had already brought her one conviction. Quite apart from the common explanation of vanity and optimism, and the use of a method with which she was familiar, it had also been a highly successful method even after her first conviction. The detective in charge of the case told me that she had been stopped on several occasions in stores and shops in scattered areas, but the distracted-husband-searching-for-the-absent-minded-mis-laid-wife trick had worked. No matter how much store detectives and managements had doubted the story, it had been sufficiently convincing, or, at least, open to a sufficient element of doubt, to justify letting the woman go.

The woman always used the same tactics; she never took more than one article at a time, an expensive one, and only then after she had bought something previously. And for the article which she purchased she had either a receipt or the goods were wrapped by a shop assistant. Nothing was ever found in her handbag or the pockets of her coat which did not belong to her.

* * * *

The largest C.R.O. entries are in the Fraud section. Only a small proportion of those, however, are concerned with the big financial swindles, false prospectuses and share pushing. The rest

is made up of a wide variety of offences. All are as old as crime itself, and yet they constantly find new victims. They include antique dealers who sell things which would never last long enough to be antiques; bookmakers and tipsters who never make a book or give a tip; the sender of begging letters for charities which begin and end in their own homes; the lost purse or wallet expert who battens on other peoples' good nature; inventors whose only inventions are the lies they tell to raise money; the false pretence people who pose as clergymen, retired Service officers or actors, and who borrow or beg money from genuine clergymen, retired Service officers, and actors.

The men and women whose names make up the Fraud Index rarely differ from other criminals. They are experts who specialize in a particular type of fraud. They may vary their methods, but the man or woman who raises money by the hard luck story, will generally carry out that type of fraud, although he may be a retired jockey one day and a journalist who has lost his wallet the next day.

But whether he be jockey, journalist, artist, auctioneer or actor, C.R.O. will surely be able to recognize him. He may use an alias; but there is an index for aliases, with one man who is credited with no fewer than 440. And if the pseudo journalist or jockey has any deformity or physical peculiarity—that helps to trace him too. He cannot hide many of these deformities and physical peculiarities, for there is nothing he can do to change his height, the colour of his eyes, the size of his ears or the flatness of his feet.

An outstanding example of co-operation between the Divisional detectives and C.R.O. is that of the case of Edward Vickers, more generally known as "Flannelfoot". This nickname was not given to him by the newspapers, but until his identity was established it was the only name by which the Yard knew him for the greater part of the five years that he eluded the C.I.D.

The story of Flannelfoot began in 1936, first as isolated cases of housebreaking which were worked on a broad, general pattern which was not, in the first place, sufficient to build up any sort of record. Over a long period of time, however, a picture of *A Man* was created.

He was a suburban thief who worked in most of London's outlying areas. As a rule he entered small, semi-detached houses, and mostly he would work several jobs in the same road. As a rule, too, he only searched for money, and confined his activities, in the main, to Saturday and Sunday nights, when there was every chance of there being reasonable sums of money about. He, too, generally stole a cycle and hid it while he worked, but he varied his methods of entry. Sometimes he would get in by the familiar but successful trick of placing a piece of treacle-covered brown paper over a pane of glass and breaking it noiselessly; this would give him easy access to locks and catches. Sometimes he would remove the putty round a window pane, and on other occasions he would pick the lock of a kitchen or other door at the back of a house.

Inside the house he worked quickly, quietly, and efficiently. He never left a single fingerprint or anything by which he could be identified. Experience had taught him that many suburban people kept money in drawers, tins and boxes, and that handbags containing money were frequently left downstairs while their owners slept peacefully upstairs.

As he covered his shoes with pieces of material, which were believed to be flannel, there was not even a clear footprint that could be taken and matched with any other.

As each burglary in different areas (and at intervals repeated in the same areas) was recorded and mapped, it became clear to C.R.O. that they were the work of the same man. It also became clear that he was intelligent, and a thief on a large scale. But there was no matching record in the Crime Index. During that long time Flannelfoot became a major problem, and a major nuisance, to C.R.O. and a large number of D.D.I.'s.

His exploits provided the newspapers with a long series of headline stories. Many romantic and inaccurate legends were attached to him. But the true story, such as it was, could be found only in C.R.O.'s Wanted Index. Finally, some three years after his crimes had first been reported, a special squad of detectives was formed to try to bring him to justice.

As a result of the squad's intensive investigation, of constant

checking of his movements and his methods, a clue to his identity was found. It was no more than a clue, and it was found by constant verification with the Crime Index. At first, several men were considered to be likely suspects, as they used some of his methods, but no one person used them all consistently. Nevertheless, they were all shadowed, and some were questioned, but they were all eliminated from the list except one.

His name was Edward Vickers. The Crime Index showed that he had one previous conviction, twenty years earlier. Every detective in the squad, which was made up of men and women, tracked this final suspect, their first object being to discover his address.

Vickers soon realized that he was being followed. He had been watching police too long not to recognize them when they were watching him. He dodged up and down side streets, varied his route to and from his home, took rides on 'buses, trams and trains in an increasingly desperate effort to throw off the pack of hunting detectives. But he failed. The police set their trap and waited for him to spring it.

Throughout this intensive day and night shadowing Flannelfoot continued with his burglaries. So far, of course, the police had not followed him to any of the scenes of his crimes, but had concentrated on finding the base from which he operated. Why did so intelligent a man not suspend his activities? No one ever knew the real answer to that, but it may have been vanity, or confidence born of long experience, or an urgent need to go on acquiring money.

Meanwhile the squad of detectives took a flat opposite his home for their base. Clever though he had been to realize that he had been followed, he never knew that the police were now almost looking through his windows. And to lull him into a false sense of security, he was allowed to carry on with his nightly raids without being followed.

Then came a night in October 1937 when the Statistics Department at the Yard, which plots all crime movement on a map, was able to forecast that he would be operating at the London suburb of Eastcote. Orders were given for him to be followed and arrested.

It was a tense and dramatic moment even for experienced and case-hardened detectives when Flannelfoot left his home at half-past ten that night.

A detective followed him all the way to an Underground station. Flannelfoot waited on the platform. The detective waited, too, hidden in the half-lighted shadows. The train drew in. Flannelfoot made no move to enter it. The guard signalled. The doors began to close. Swiftly Flannelfoot leapt in just before they shut.

The train moved off, leaving a disappointed and frustrated detective on the platform. Whether Flannelfoot knew that the policeman was there, or whether he had been doing this regularly as a precaution, no one knew. Nevertheless, it was a daring and deliberate trick which worked. But not for long. The detective got on the telephone, and a Flying Squad car went to Eastcote.

At two o'clock in the morning he was arrested as he was leaving a house. There was no doubt about his guilt, for he had the stolen property and housebreaking instruments in his possession.

So ended a five-year search, which could never have been successfully concluded without the patience of the desk detectives. Vickers was subsequently found guilty and given five years' penal servitude. He died while he was serving his sentence, and it was estimated that in five years he had carried out some 2000 robberies.

* * * *

The Flannelfoot case was one which took an exceptionally long time to solve. Most of those which are referred to C.R.O. are solved quickly if there is a name or an identity in the Index. So experienced are the C.R.O. staff that, with some inquiries, they can fit the details to a name and need refer to the file only for verification.

Fully occupied though C.R.O. is, only a minority of C.I.D. cases are referred there. Most of the crimes which keep the C.I.D. busy are local jobs, which can generally be solved by patient inquiry and local knowledge, and by the help of that store of "inside information" which every detective has. But if it is not a local job, or if "inside information" fails, then the C.I.D. must go outside—most likely to C.R.O.

Although C.R.O. is a permanent record of the nation's crooks, the department does not keep all its information in its files and wait for incoming inquiries. A mass of up-to-the-minute news and facts is circulated daily by the Yard's newspaper, the *Police Gazette*, and its supplements. These contain descriptions of the latest stolen property; wanted persons whose details, if they are known at C.R.O., accompany each description; and the latest news of each day's crime. The supplements include a photographic issue of convicts being released on licence, and of other people for whom the police are searching or "who may be able to assist them in their inquiries". The *Police Gazette* and its supplements are sent daily to every police station in Britain so that every uniformed and plain clothes man has the latest news when he goes on duty. Copies are also sent, for file purposes, to police forces elsewhere in the world.

The modern *Police Gazette* began as the *Hue and Cry*, which was issued from Bow Street in 1829. It was then a weekly newspaper, but its title was changed to the *Police Gazette* in 1883, and it became a daily paper in 1914.

Although there are other criminal record offices outside the Metropolitan Police area, the Yard's C.R.O. is the largest organization of its kind in the world, except perhaps America's F.B.I. Index. The Yard C.R.O. serves not only all the criminal investigation departments in the British Isles but is also available for police inquiries throughout the world. In return, C.R.O.'s massive "Who's Who" is constantly fed by other British police forces and, in certain circumstances, overseas forces which send information about their criminals. In Britain the record of everyone who is convicted of a serious offence must be sent to Scotland Yard. That record remains so long as the convicted person is alive. It is as infallible as the fingerprint.

FINDING OUT BY FINGERPRINTS

A JURY returned to their box to give their verdict in a murder trial in Number One Court at the Old Bailey. They had been out for two hours and twenty minutes, and, in an atmosphere that was more than usually tense and dramatic, the Clerk of the Court stood up.

"Are you agreed upon your verdict?" he asked the foreman.

"We are."

"Do you find the prisoners at the bar guilty or not guilty of the murder of Edward and Agnes Farrow?"

"We find the prisoners guilty."

It was an historic verdict. As a result of it two men were hanged—the first murderers ever to be convicted on the evidence of fingerprints.

* * * *

The story began some months earlier on March 27th, 1905, when the police were called to an oil shop in High Street, Deptford. There they found the manager, an elderly man named Farrow, lying dead in the kitchen at the back of the shop. The battering he had received on his head and face made it obvious that he had been murdered. Upstairs in the bedroom the police found his wife. She, too, had been battered about the head, and, although she was still alive, she survived only a few days. The police waited patiently by her bedside at the hospital for a statement, but she died without uttering a word.

The motive was almost certainly robbery, but the C.I.D. were without any of the then accepted clues which would definitely prove the identity of the murderer. It was established that the attack had been made shortly after seven o'clock on the morning of Monday, March 27th. It was ascertained, too, that on every

Monday morning Farrow paid the week's takings to the owner of the shop. The money was kept in a cash box in the bedroom where Mrs. Farrow had been discovered, and this was found broken open and the money missing.

But on the enamelled tray of the cash box was a single blurred fingerprint.

The fact that the murderer had presumably known of Farrow's habit of giving the takings to the owner every Monday pointed to someone with local knowledge. Further C.I.D. inquiries led to two brothers named Stratton coming under suspicion. They were already known to the police, and several people volunteered the information that they had seen the two men near the oil shop at about seven o'clock on that Monday morning. But, as so often happens in such cases, there were conflicting identity reports. Nevertheless, the brothers were arrested, and their fingerprints taken. The police were satisfied that the print on the cash box was that of Alfred Stratton's right thumb, as it agreed in twelve points with the print which the police took from Stratton himself. In those days, however, juries, counsel, and the general public had not yet accepted as a fact that fingerprint evidence by itself was conclusive, and were unconvinced that no two prints could ever be alike.

Scotland Yard had waited for a long time for an opportunity to prove beyond doubt that fingerprints could be put in as conclusive and decisive evidence. There had been comparatively minor convictions in which prints had played an important part since the introduction of the system at the Yard four years earlier, but in all these cases the prints had merely corroborated other and more acceptable evidence. In the Stratton case, for the first time, the other evidence was subordinate to the fingerprints; without these, and without the jury having been convinced of their infallibility, there was enough doubt to make the Crown's evidence open to suspicion.

It was evident from the beginning of the case that the prosecution in general and the Yard's fingerprint expert, Inspector Collins, in particular were in for a difficult task. But the Inspector worked as hard on that jury as he had done to bring the case to court.

Counsel for the defence subjected him to a ruthless cross-examination in which he ridiculed the fingerprint system, and called upon an "expert" witness to denounce it. To explain a point to a somewhat bewildered jury Inspector Collins took impressions of the prints of a member. Throughout the verbal battle that followed, one thing was gradually made clear to the jury—there was no doubt in their minds that the Inspector had produced two sets of prints, one from the cash box and the other from Alfred Stratton's thumb, which were exactly alike.

Was it really true, the jury now had to ask themselves, that no two fingerprints could possibly ever be duplicated? It was a heavy responsibility, as the lives of two men depended on their verdict. Was there just a chance, one in a million, perhaps, that there could be a duplicate print? It was all very well for the experts to say that the chances of duplication could be ruled out as impossible, but already the court had seen expert witnesses flatly contradicting each other. The jury were not helped in their dilemma by the learned judge who, in his summing up, advised them not to accept the prints as conclusive evidence. But during their long deliberations that is just what they did do—and the brothers Stratton were hanged.

* * * *

The fingerprint system was officially adopted by Scotland Yard in 1901 when Sir Edward Henry joined the Metropolitan Police as Assistant Commissioner. Before that he had been Inspector-General of Police in Bengal, where fingerprints had been used, commercially and politically, as identification marks, and mostly for people who could not write or as a precaution against false representation. Some candidates for a government post, for instance, having passed their qualifying test, would sell their job to someone who could not pass the examination. The use of fingerprints stopped this. Sir Edward also devised a method of classifying prints for criminal identification in Bengal, but he was not, as has been often suggested, the inventor of the fingerprint system, although he was the first man to adapt it for criminal investigation.

That prints could be used at all for identification purposes was discovered by Sir William Herschel, of the Indian Civil Service, and later Sir Francis Galton, the famous anthropologist and eugenicist, did further research on the subject. His interest in fingerprints was confined, in the first instance, to his own work, but when in 1897 the Home Office set up a Committee to investigate their adoption for criminal identification he was invited to give evidence. It was his evidence that convinced the members that there might be something in the theory that the loops, arches, whorls, and composites on the fingers and thumbs of every human being were not only incapable of duplication, but could not be destroyed or removed by burning, surgical operation, or death. Not even the prints of identical twins are the same.

Such a startling theory was not, of course, accepted without further inquiry and research. When, however, Sir Edward Henry arrived at the Yard he decided to introduce the system to the C.I.D., and the first fingerprint department was opened in 1901, a year after he had himself given evidence before yet another Home Office inquiry into the subject.

The great difficulty about the use of fingerprints for criminal identification, apart from the necessity of convincing everyone that there was no possibility of duplication, was that of classification. Sir Edward overcame this by his system, which was based on the four main classifications of loops, arches, whorls, and composites. This is still the basis of fingerprint identification to-day, but it has been broken down into numerous other subdivisions.

In 1903 Sir Edward was appointed Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, and in that year the Yard's fingerprint department was extended into a Central Bureau whose records were available to every police force in Britain.

Since then great progress has been made by the Yard's experts, the most notable of whom were Superintendent Battley and Chief Superintendent Frederick Cherrill. Battley is best known for having devised the single-print method of identification.

It will be appreciated that if the Yard depended solely on its main collection, too much time would be spent in searching among

the vast accumulation. To-day there are about one and a half million sets of complete impressions at Scotland Yard, and this figure is increased by some fifty thousand each year. As each complete set is made up of all eight fingers and two thumbs, there are over ten million records. The figure of approximately one and a half million is maintained by removing the prints of people who have not been convicted again within a specified number of years; these prints are then put into the Dead Section. Nevertheless, if the existing total were not sub-divided, the system would still be too cumbersome for speedy use.

To overcome this, Superintendent Battley devised his single-print method shortly after the 1914-18 war. In addition to the main collection, the impressions of all eight fingers and two thumbs are each shown on a separate card. Many of the impressions which are left behind by criminals are single prints; and it would be an almost impossible task to search through the main collection to match one single unknown print among some ten million. The single fingerprint record is made up of persons who have either been convicted during the past five years or of other criminals who are known to be still "working".

When prints are removed from this record they are placed in what can best be described as a reserve file; this consists of prints from people with a record which extends over the eighteen years beyond the current five years file.

As well as its collection of identifiable prints, Scotland Yard also has a *Scene of the Crime* collection. This consists of impressions taken at the scene of a crime and for which there are no counterparts in the other files. These unmatched ones remain in the *Scene of the Crime* file until the day arrives when a man is arrested, his prints taken, and he is found to have committed other offences.

Prints may remain in the *Scene of the Crime* file for many years, but they can always be matched with the original. Neither age, nor illness, nor death, nor deformity can change them. In very rare examples the ridges can be removed from the finger-tips, but they will grow again.

There is a case on record of a criminal who endured terrible pain

in an effort to burn the ridges off his finger-tips by using acid. He succeeded, and in due course resumed his work, confident that the fatal clues had been removed. But ten years later his prints were found and easily recognized.

If the man had died immediately, or soon after his self-inflicted operation, it would still have been possible to have identified him, should that have been necessary. The tell-tale marks are more than skin deep, and a skilled surgeon could probe beneath the mutilated ridges and still find identity marks to match any prints in the *Scene of the Crime* file.

Despite the vital, decisive nature of a fingerprint clue it is surprising how many criminals still leave their "dabs" at the scene of a crime. There are never as many as some detective story writers would have us believe, and they are rarely as clear-cut or as neatly and conveniently arranged for the real-life detective. Nevertheless, the one and a half million sets of complete prints at Scotland Yard bear witness to the carelessness, inexperience, and ignorance of many thousands of criminals.

Murder, manslaughter, and other crimes of violence are more likely these days to be solved with the aid of fingerprints than are some other crimes, because they are often unpremeditated, unplanned, and carried out at short notice by people who are not professional criminals.

But even the experienced professional can be careless or forgetful. I once knew a safebreaker, a first-class workman with a professional's pride in his job. A moment's forgetfulness ended his activities for five years. He had completed what he described as "one of the neatest blows I ever did". He had entered the building without causing any damage, had been equally careful while he "did his blow", with no prints or other signs left behind. He took off his gloves as he came out into the yard of the building in which he had cracked his safe, and climbed on to the top of a wall, ready to drop down on the towpath of a canal just beyond it. He paused for a second to balance himself for the short jump—and rested the palm of his hand on the top of the wall. It had a glazed surface, and the imprint of his palm,

indistinct and blurred, was found by the questing, ferreting pack of fingerprint experts.

Palmprints, like fingerprints, can never be duplicated. To-day a jury accepts them as irrefutable proof.

An example of how judges and juries are now prepared to accept finger- and palmprints as conclusive evidence is provided by the case of James Robinson, who was sentenced to death at Birmingham Assizes on March 29th, 1955, for the murder of 83-years-old Mrs. Mary Ann Dodsley. Robinson appealed against the verdict, principally on the grounds that if one pathologist's estimate of the time of the old lady's death was correct, he could not have committed the crime because he was in a public house half a mile away.

There were in fact two pathologists, one for the Crown, and the other for the defence. As so often happens the anxious jury heard two expert witnesses contradict each other. The witness for the Crown, who was unable to examine the body until the morning after the old lady was found dead, put the time of her death between the hours of 11 p.m. and 1 a.m.

The witness for the defence was more definite. He put the time between 9 p.m. and 10 p.m. And at 10 p.m. it was established, and accepted by the Crown, that the accused was in the public house.

But over-riding all this was the fact that where the window by which Robinson was alleged to have entered was broken, the imprint of a human palm was found. Although the murder had taken place in Birmingham, it was Scotland Yard's print branch which had examined the palmprint; and the detective in charge of that examination told the jury that the print matched Robinson's palm. But Robinson's counsel produced the expert witness who disputed the time of death, and put forward the alibi of the public house.

There was also one piece of glass, which was found on Robinson's clothing. It was certainly similar to that of the broken window, but no one would swear that it was exactly the same.

The jury, then, had to choose between a very competent and experienced pathologist who said that death had taken place while the accused had been elsewhere, and an equally competent and

experienced pathologist who contradicted him; in addition, they had to decide if the palmprint was conclusive.

After a six-hour consideration the jury accepted the evidence of the palmprint.

At the subsequent appeal the Lord Chief Justice said that if this crime had been committed fifty, or even thirty years ago, Robinson might never have been convicted. Although there were other pieces of evidence, added the Lord Chief Justice, such as the single piece of glass, the palmprint was the most vital. The case depended on that and that alone.

The Court of Criminal Appeal considered that the pathologist for the defence had been too precise in fixing the time of death. The Lord Chief Justice said: "If the appellant's pathologist were right, beyond peradventure that would support the appellant's alibi, but it would not get rid of the fact that his palmprint was found at the house."

The appeal was dismissed.

Although fingerprints are now almost a commonplace of crime detection, and are accepted as conclusive evidence, equally they must be presented conclusively to a jury. Unless a print and its original have at least sixteen similarities the police will not submit them as evidence.

In the early days, prints had to be clear, definite impressions, and many a criminal avoided arrest because nothing could be done with a blurred print. Now, however, not only can blurred half-formed impressions be taken and identified but what are known as latent prints, which are hidden to the naked eye, can also be detected. Only a powerful magnifying glass will show latent prints, which can then be brought up for normal vision by the use of powerful lamps, projectors, and cameras. If a print defies even these scientific aids, then chemical powders can be used, but these may not always give a completely clear impression.

The powders are dusted on. For dark and highly-polished surfaces a light grey powder is used, consisting of metallic mercury and powdered chalk. For light surfaces, a black-powdered graphite gives the desired results, while charcoal powder will reveal prints left on paper. Impressions on soft, damp-like surfaces,

such as those of cheese or soap, will generally respond to ultra-violet rays, which throw the print in relief so that it can be photographed.

But the ultra-violet rays are only one of the many scientific and photographic wonders which now load the dice against the modern criminal.

5

SOMETHING FROM NOTHING

IN MANY detective stories and thrillers, police detectives are given too much credit, and particularly in those books which have murder as their crime. The police surgeon arrives, and having established the time of death, has no further part in the story. It is frequently the detective who finds out that the foreign matter beneath the victim's fingernails is minute pieces of skin where someone's face has been desperately scratched, that a victim was attacked from behind by a left-handed killer, that a spanner found in the kitchen was the fatal blunt instrument, that the few unidentifiable remains of a charred body had once belonged to a man aged about forty-five years and five feet six inches tall, and that an apparent death by suicide was in fact death by murder.

In reality it is almost invariably the pathologist who makes or confirms such deductions. As I shall show in this and subsequent chapters, considerable scientific and medical skill is necessary in modern crime detection. This does not make the detective himself any less a master of his profession. Although he is not a specialized expert, his all-round scientific knowledge is extensive and can add considerably not only to the essential co-operation at the scene of the crime but also to any interpretation of reports from pathologists, biologists, chemists, and other forensic experts. But when any one of these experts is working on a case, the detective's primary job is to make use of and follow up the results of forensic investigation.

In nearly every case of death by violence, be it murder or manslaughter, the pathologist is at the scene of the crime with the detectives, the fingerprint experts, and the photographers. Sometimes he can carry out all his work on the spot, thereby saving invaluable time by assessing when death took place, how that death was caused, and the sort of person who might have caused it.

More often, however, he can provide only part of the information on the spot and the rest must be confirmed in his laboratory. While he carries out a post-mortem, other persons engaged in solving the crime, such as chemists, analysts, biologists, dentists, X-ray and ballistic experts, will be playing their part.

One small incident from the case of two young thugs named Dashwood and Silverosa provides us with an example of how the pathologist can save time by working closely with the detective in charge at the beginning of his investigations.

An old man who kept a pawnbroker's shop in East London was beaten up by two thugs. Nine days later he died, and what had begun as a case of robbery with violence turned swiftly into a murder hunt. While the Home Office pathologist, the brilliant and famous Dr. Keith Simpson, was carrying out his post-mortem, the detective in charge, Chief Superintendent Edward Greeno, produced a heavy spanner. There was evidence to show that this might have been the blunt instrument which had killed the old man. Dr. Simpson, however, examined the five brutal blows on the head and decided that they were not caused by the spanner but by some other instrument. Only a pathologist could have arrived at such a decision. This valuable information saved Superintendent Greeno and his assistants from wasting their time on enquiries about the ownership of the spanner. Later, when Dashwood and Silverosa had been arrested (they were subsequently hanged for the murder) it was found that they had battered their victim with the butt of a revolver.

* * * *

Three further cases can be quoted as examples of vital, positive evidence which eventually proved to be conclusive. The first of these, *The Murder in the Crypt*, is perhaps the classic example of how positive evidence was built up from very little indeed. It is an example, too, of a murder which never could have been solved without the pathologist's work. And the pathologist was again Dr. Keith Simpson.

On July 17th, 1942, some demolition workers clearing away air-raid debris in Kennington Lane, London, discovered the skeleton

of a body buried under a stone slab. In those war-time days of heavy and constant air-raids, violent death was commonplace, and the workmen did not do what they would normally have done and send for the police. Thinking that the skeleton was the remains of an air-raid casualty, or that it might even be that of someone who had been buried years earlier in a neighbouring disused graveyard, the workmen left it on the bombed site, and did not report the discovery to their foreman until their day's work was done. The foreman then told the local coroner's officer.

Such a discovery might be a commonplace in war-time, and laymen may well be excused for thinking that the corpse, or what was left of it, was an air-raid victim, or something which had been disturbed from a long rest in the next-door graveyard. But coroners' officers, the police, pathologists, and the like, do not deal in assumptions but only in facts. Any dead body found in unknown circumstances must be the subject of an inquest, and the cause of death legally established.

The day after the discovery of the body, Dr. Keith Simpson was asked to carry out a post-mortem. Up to then it had been generally assumed that the skeleton was in fact an air-raid casualty, as it did not look to be old enough to have come from the disused graveyard. Indeed, after his first cursory examination, Dr. Simpson was at last able to confirm that it could not have come from the graveyard. It also revealed something else—the skeleton was that of a woman or a girl who had died some year or eighteen months previously.

Dr. Simpson had the skeleton removed to the Gordon Museum at Guy's Hospital, to which he was attached. He cleaned the remains, constructed the bones—and came to the conclusion that an air-raid had not been responsible for the death. When the skeleton had been found, the head, although near the body, was separated from it. And it was the method of that separation which convinced Dr. Simpson that no bomb, or bomb blast, had been the cause of death. It was a clean, neat separation. Parts of the arms and legs were missing, as were the lower jaw, all the facial, and nearly all the head tissues. Every one of the missing parts had been deliberately removed. But more important and conclusive

than the parts which were missing, were signs of burns on the skeleton.

Everything pointed to the murder of a woman or girl whose body had been cut up, the face disfigured by the removal of the tissue, and then in a final attempt to ensure that all recognition had gone, subjected to burning. That having been done, the remains had been buried under a slab among the ruins of a bombed building.

While the detectives were making inquiries in the Southwark district about missing persons, Dr. Simpson made a scientific reconstruction of what the complete body had once been. As a result of X-rays of the bones, he estimated the woman's age as having been between forty and fifty when she died. Although the murderer had gone to an enormous amount of trouble to remove virtually all the face and skull tissues, one small particle had been left behind. And it was that which, under Dr. Simpson's microscopic examination, revealed that the woman had dark brown hair which was turning grey. The next thing was to establish her height. This is not as clever or mysterious a process as it might appear, for there is a well-established mathematical series of formulae known as Pearson's formulae. By this method it was reckoned that the woman had been about five feet one inch tall and Dr. Simpson was now able to provide the C.I.D. with a remarkably accurate picture. There were other identifiable details, including one which was to have its place in the eventual identification. The woman had suffered from a fibroid growth which had not been removed by operation.

With all this in his possession, the D.D.I. began his hunt among the missing persons file. Despite the large number of air-raid casualties in South London, there were very few which had not been traced or identified, but among these few was a Mrs. Harry Dobkin.

The police had been interested in the disappearance of Mrs. Harry Dobkin since her sister had reported her absence fifteen months earlier. It was almost certain that she had not been killed in an air-raid, for her handbag, containing those war-time necessities of ration book and identity card, had been found at Guild-

ford post-office in Surrey, the day after her sister had last seen her alive. The police had interviewed her husband. This was more than mere formality because Harry Dobkin's sister-in-law had told the police quite frankly that she suspected him of being responsible for the disappearance.

Dobkin was a war-time fire-watcher at the building in Kennington Lane next door to where workmen were to find the skeleton fifteen months later. This was a Baptist Chapel which had been severely damaged by a bomb. A few hours before the C.I.D. had interviewed him after his wife's disappearance, a fire had broken out in the crypt, and although he was a fire-watcher, it was not Dobkin who called the brigade, but a patrolling policeman.

When the C.I.D. interviewed him, Dobkin was already suspected of having set fire to the crypt, and it did not take the police long to link the fire and the disappearance of Mrs. Harry Dobkin. Her husband denied any knowledge of her after they had parted on April 12th, four days earlier. The C.I.D., however, were convinced that Dobkin did know something about his wife's disappearance, and during the next two or three weeks C.R.O. circulated a description of the missing woman, and details, together with a photograph, were published in the *Police Gazette*. A thorough and patient search was made of the crypt, and this led to the discovery of a small, grave-like hollow which had been freshly dug.

But there was no sign of a body, and no sign that a body had ever been there. Why then was that grave-like hollow there? Why had Harry Dobkin set fire to the place, as the C.I.D. were now certain he had done? The only answer to these questions seemed to be that he had intended to bury his wife in the hollow, had been forced to change his plans, had disposed of her body elsewhere, and set fire to the cellar to remove any clues.

But all this was still only conjecture, and unless Mrs. Dobkin's body was found, her husband could not be charged with her murder. By the end of May, some five or six weeks after Mrs. Dobkin had disappeared, the case was put in the unsolved file.

But now with Dr. Simpson's evidence and brilliant reconstruction in their possession, the C.I.D. re-opened the case. They soon

proved that Mrs. Dobkin had been to the London Hospital for her fibroid growth, but had declined to be operated upon, that she had brown hair which was turning grey, that she was five feet one inch in height, and that she was forty-seven years of age.

Could there be any doubt that the skeleton was that of the missing woman? Could there be any doubt that Harry Dobkin had murdered her?

So far as the C.I.D. were concerned there was no doubt at all. But in the view of the Yard this evidence was not conclusive enough to "prove beyond all reasonable doubt" that Dobkin was guilty.

In an effort to find the missing parts of the body further searches were made in the crypt, and among the rubble and earth. But they could not be found.

Meanwhile, Dr. Simpson studied every aspect of the skeleton again and again, searching for a possible solution; and that led to a new search for Mrs. Dobkin's dentist. From South London that search moved across the capital to North London, and finally to Crouch End, where the dentist was found. Among his records were Mrs. Dobkin's cards. From them he drew a diagram which showed the state of the upper jaw. Dr. Simpson compared it with that of the skeleton, and it was an exact match. Further, the dentist was able to confirm that the traces of the fillings in the jaw were supplied by him.

The dentist's record cards also showed that, although he had extracted two teeth from the left side of the upper jaw, he had not removed several roots. The upper jaw on the skeleton was X-rayed by the Guy's Hospital dental surgeon, Sir William Kelsey Fry, and that revealed the hidden roots.

Now the C.I.D. wanted the final evidence, the last interlocking piece of the jig-saw puzzle which positive proof demanded. How had Harry Dobkin killed his wife?

Dr. Simpson returned to the skeleton and examined it yet again, going over it piece by piece, until he stopped at what remained of the voice-box. This was part of the skeleton which showed signs of having been burnt. Among the minute fragments, Dr. Simpson found even more minute signs of a dried blood clot.

This had been caused by bruising following abnormally heavy pressure on the throat. More patient examination followed, as a result of which Dr. Simpson was able to prove "beyond all reasonable doubt" that Mrs. Dobkin had been strangled.

This was enough. Harry Dobkin was charged with the murder of his wife. In the following November he was tried at the Old Bailey, found guilty and subsequently hanged.

There is an ironic tail-piece to the story of the Murder in the Crypt. When Dobkin found that his efforts to set fire to the remains were unsuccessful, he had thrown slaked lime over them, in a last attempt to destroy all signs of his crime. But he did not know that slaked lime preserves and does not destroy. Because of that ignorance, Dr. Keith Simpson had been able to examine the voice-box and so establish the cause of death.

* * * *

The second of our classic examples comes from Dr. Simpson's predecessor at the Home Office, the world-famous pathologist, the late Sir Bernard Spilsbury. This, too, was a case where burning and strangulation were the dominant factors.

A fire blazed in a room in a Margate hotel, and when it was extinguished the charred body of Mrs. Rosalind Fox was found. She had been staying at the hotel with her son, Sidney. He gave evidence at the inquest, where a verdict of accidental death was returned, and he promptly claimed the substantial amount of money which was due from the insurance on his mother's life.

But there were one or two features about the death of Mrs. Fox, and about Sidney Fox, too, which made the insurance company suspicious. In the first place, Sidney had waited until the room was a mass of impenetrable flames before he had raised the alarm. This showed a surprising lack of concern by a devoted son. Although the Coroner's Court had been satisfied on this point, the insurance company was not.

By itself, it was not enough to do more than arouse suspicion, but when the company's records were examined, they showed that Sidney Fox had been previously involved in an insurance claim.

Armed with this information, the company asked Scotland Yard to make a few inquiries.

Mrs. Fox's body was exhumed, and Sir Bernard Spilsbury carried out an extensive post-mortem on it. This disclosed that there were no signs of soot in her windpipe, which there certainly would have been if she had been alive when the fire began. Neither was there any carbon dioxide in her blood, which there would also have been had she been alive at the time. But there were signs of extensive bruising inside the throat which Sir Bernard was certain had been caused by strangulation.

Fox was arrested. In due course he was tried, found guilty and hanged. Thus another murderer discovered that resources unknown to him had defeated an apparently perfect murder.

* * * *

The third classic example of a pathologist who created something from almost nothing relates to the Stanley Setty murder. The bare facts of the case were fully reported in the Press, but of more interest to us here is the conclusive pathological work which was carried out. Oddly enough, that work was to be conclusive for both the prosecution and the defence.

In its bare essentials, the case for the prosecution was that a motor dealer, Stanley Setty, had been murdered by a man named Douglas Hume, who had dismembered the body in his London flat, packed it in a parcel and dropped it into the sea over the Essex mud-flats from an aircraft which he had piloted himself. The C.I.D. had established beyond arguable doubt that Hume's flat contained bloodstains belonging to the same group as that of Setty; this, however, was by no means conclusive, as they belonged to the most common of the recognized groups belonging to the white races, Group O. There were, however, many other seemingly damning facts which made the prosecution's case apparently unanswerable. Hume's defence was well prepared, well arranged, and well presented.

Briefly, the case for the defence was that for a sum of £100 Hume had agreed to drop a large and bulky parcel into the sea. This had been handed to him by three men whom the police had



Photo. Keystone

5 A safe has been stolen and hidden in the woods just outside Edinburgh. Using a mobile darkroom, experts here take fingerprint impressions, etc., from the safe.



Photo. Keystone

6 Stratford-on-Avon. Detectives search for clues to the killer of Nurse Olive Bennet, whose body was found in the river.



Photo. Scotland Yard

7 & 8 Detailed examination of clues in the well-equipped laboratory at Scotland Yard.

Photo. Scotland Yard



been unable to trace, or to find anyone (except Hume and one of his friends) who had ever heard of them. In his first statement to the police, he had omitted to say that there had been blood-stains in his flat, or that he had taken elaborate precautions to clear them up. But the Metropolitan Police forensic laboratory discovered numerous signs of blood, and of a group which was the same as Setty's. The C.I.D. found that Hume had had a carpet cleaned and dyed on or about October 5th. The cleaning and dyeing process, however, had been so thoroughly done that, although the laboratory found traces of blood still on it, they were unable to identify it as belonging to Group O.

When faced by this formidable array of evidence, Hume admitted that he had cleaned up the blood, and that when the parcel had been delivered to his flat he had every reason to believe that it contained a body, which he suspected might be that of Stanley Setty. He went on to say that he knew that Setty was mixed up with the three men the police never traced. He admitted, also, that four of the five-pound notes with which the men had paid him, bore the same numbers as those which had been part of more than £1,000 in Setty's possession on October 4th, 1949, the day on which he was last seen alive.

Whatever inconsistencies there might have been in Hume's case, his answer to the charge was consistent throughout. He had had no part in the killing of Setty; he had been asked by the three men to dump the parcel; he knew that it would contain something illegal because he had previously dropped other parcels, which had contained forged petrol coupons, but it was not until the single parcel had been left in his flat that he realized it had a body inside. By then it was too late to do anything about it, especially, as he thought, the police would be certain to accuse him of the murder. Moreover, when the body had been identified as being that of Setty, one of the three men had telephoned him and warned him not to say anything to the C.I.D.

The pathological part of the story began soon after the parcel containing Setty's body had been washed up on the lonely, deserted Essex flats. This was on October 21st, and the discovery was made by a farm labourer who was out in his punt on the flats

in a dawn search for wildfowl. As soon as he found that the parcel contained the torso of a body, he tied it to a stake and reported to the Essex County Constabulary.

The post-mortem pathological work which followed was carried out by two people. The vital, first post-mortem examinations were made by Dr. F. C. Camps, and further examinations, tests, and investigations by Dr. Teare, a Home Office pathologist attached to the London Hospital.

The post-mortem established five main points: (1) that the man had been stabbed to death in the chest, and that a sharp double-edged weapon had probably been used; (2) that the head and legs had been cut off by a sharp instrument; (3) that the thigh bones had been sawn through; (4) that the ribs and many of the bones had been fractured after death, which indicated a fall from a considerable height; and (5) that the man had been killed not more than forty-eight hours before he had been dropped into the sea.

In addition to the actual post-mortem examination, Dr. Camps removed the skin from the fingertips of the hands, and these were sent to the Fingerprint Department at Scotland Yard, which identified them as being those of one Stanley Setty, who had been convicted of fraud in 1928.

The Metropolitan Police already knew that Stanley Setty had disappeared, as his brother-in-law had reported his absence on October 5th, the day after he was last seen alive, to Albany Street Police Station.

The Chief Constable of Essex decided that this was a case for help from the Yard.

As soon as the news of the murder was published in the newspapers, the Chief Engineer of the United Services Flying Club, at Elstree, told the C.I.D. that a man named Hume had hired an Auster aircraft on October 5th. Hume was already known at the club, and before he took off in the Auster he paid a bill with five-pound notes. He had flown away from Elstree at five o'clock in the afternoon with the apparent intention of going to the Southend-on-Sea Flying Club.

This might have been a false clue and no more than coincidence, but a late afternoon in October was not a normal time for anyone

to go for a pleasure flight. On the other hand, it could be the first link in the chain of evidence. The post-mortem report had already established that the extensive after-death injuries were consistent with the torso having been dropped from a considerable height.

The Yard moved rapidly. Further inquiries at the airport produced evidence that three mechanics remembered Hume arriving in a black Singer car. He had taken a heavy parcel from the car and loaded it into the Auster.

The hunt for Douglas Hume was now well on, but Detective Inspector Colin MacDougall, who was in charge of the case, built up his evidence in great detail before Hume was interviewed.

The aircraft had not returned to Elstree that night, but Hume himself had returned the following morning to say that he had left the Auster at Southend and would fly it back later that day. He did not in fact do so, but left it at Gravesend.

The Yard's inquiries now switched rapidly to Southend. A member of the United Services Flying Club, who was staying at the Southend Flying Club on October 5th, said that Hume asked him if he would fly the Auster back to Elstree, but he declined.

What, then, did Hume do that night? He had not stayed at the Southend Flying Club, but he had arrived at Elstree the following morning without the Auster. The Yard had learnt that his home was at Golders Green, in London. Had he returned to London? If so, by train or road? A car hire firm in Southend soon supplied the answer; one of their drivers had taken the pilot of an Auster to Golders Green. He had paid with a five-pound note. And it was with a five-pound note that he had paid a taxi-cab driver, who recalled driving him from Gravesend to Finchley on October 6th.

When he was first questioned by the C.I.D., Hume made a bad beginning. He said that he had not driven a car for three months, but he confessed to telling a lie when the C.I.D. told him that there were several witnesses who were prepared to swear that they had seen him drive up in the Singer car. His bad beginning was not helped by his omitting any mention of the bloodstains in his flat, or of the fact that he knew there was a body in the parcel. But black though the evidence appeared, he kept to his original story, that he had had nothing to do with the killing of Stanley

Setty. Even when the C.I.D. discovered that he had sent a carving knife to be sharpened on October 5th, only an hour or so before he had arrived at Elstree Airport, he was not to be shaken.

Superficially, the Crown would seem to have had an unanswerable case, but it rested on a weakish foundation of circumstantial evidence, a weakness of which Hume's counsel took every advantage. When the case came for trial at the Central Criminal Court a whole range of questions remained to be answered. Was there any evidence that Setty had been killed in Hume's flat? No one had ever seen him there, and there was no trace of his fingerprints. Could this extensive dismembering have taken place in the flat without someone hearing, especially when the thigh bones had been sawn through? Could Setty have been stabbed and killed by one man, without putting up some sort of struggle? No one had heard a sound during the fatal night of October 4th. The prosecution could not produce conclusive answers to these penetrating questions.

And finally, perhaps the most penetrating and decisive question of all. If Setty *had* been in that flat, if he *had* struggled for his life, although the people downstairs had heard nothing of it, would there not have been signs of that struggle, of a desperate fight?

There was an answer to that question. It came from Dr. Teare, the Home Office pathologist, who had made a detailed examination of the torso after the post-mortem. His evidence was that more than one person had been involved in the death of Stanley Setty. There were no cuts or bruises on the dead man's hands, which there certainly would have been if he had been able to defend himself.

The jury were absent for two hours and twenty-nine minutes—but were unable to agree on a verdict. Hume was tried again, but the Director of Public Prosecutions offered no evidence on the main charge of murder, so that Hume stood his trial on the second charge, of being an accessory after the fact. He pleaded guilty, and went to prison for twelve years.

6

SOLVED BY SCIENCE

IF THE pathologist is perhaps the only forensic expert who can create something from almost nothing, the photographers, chemists, biologists, physicists, and analysts can often create something from what would seem to be nothing.

Sometimes only one of these specialists is needed to reveal hidden secrets, but more often, it is team work which brings success.

A "smash and grab" raid on a jeweller's shop in a provincial town a year or so after the 1939-45 war, provides a typical example of co-operation between the C.I.D. and the forensic laboratories.

As the thieves raced away from the scene of the crime, a uniformed police constable attempted to stop their car. The desperate driver ran the constable down and left him in the road. He was badly injured, and for all the men in the car knew, he might have been dead.

Except that the few eye-witnesses described the car as being a dark saloon (some said dark blue, some said black, some merely dark), there was no other clue to its identity. A radio call from police headquarters went to all patrol cars, but the raiders slipped through the cordon and escaped.

Outside the shop, detectives found several drops of blood where one of the thieves had cut his hand on the broken glass of the window. Samples of it were sent to the biology department of the district police laboratory. There was no doubt, of course, that this was human blood, but with an eye on having to convince a jury, it was tested to make sure. This was done by the precipitin test, which is so accurate that it can show not only if it is human or animal but, if it is the latter, what sort of animal.

The sample was then subjected to a grouping test to see which of the four main groups (O, A, B, AB) it belonged to. The blood proved to belong to someone in the B group. That was valuable,

and might be of considerable importance. As I have pointed out earlier in this book, O and A are the groups which are most commonly found in the white races. AB is the least common, and only about 12 per cent belong to group B. Blood identification by itself can never be conclusive, and certainly no jury would convict on it alone. But the blood of an accused person having one of the rarer groups is obviously likely to have a more decisive effect on a jury than that from O or A, which are found in 85 per cent of the white races. In other words, if the other evidence was not strong enough to secure a conviction, the fact that the accused's blood was in O or A group would almost certainly persuade a jury to give the prisoner the benefit of the doubt. If, on the other hand, a jury found that the blood belonged to one of the rarer groups, then it could be the one convincing, interlocking point which was required.

While the laboratory were carrying out their tests on the blood from the jeweller's shop raid, the C.I.D. learnt that a black saloon car had pulled up in a side street. It stopped only for a few seconds to allow a man to get out. No clear description of this man's identity could be obtained; there was, of course, no particular reason why there should be, since people do not normally pay much attention to other people who are apparently going about their lawful business.

The story of the raid received front page publicity in the two evening newspapers published in the provincial city, including details of the blood having been found on the pavement. Among the people who read it was the attendant in one of the city's lavatories. He sent for a policeman and told him that earlier in the day, a dark, sallow-faced man of about twenty-five years of age had arrived and washed the blood off what seemed to be a cut near the wrist.

The constable telephoned the C.I.D. office, and in a few minutes the detective in charge had arrived at the lavatory. A quick time-check revealed that the attendant's "earlier in the day" proved to be about ten minutes after the raid.

"Did you notice exactly where the cut was?" the detective asked.

"Not exactly, but it looked to be between the thumb and the wrist. I asked him if he wanted a bit of Elastoplast or something. Now I come to think of it, he did all he could to stop me having a look at it. And he didn't waste much time here."

"Which hand was it?"

"Left, I think . . . yes, I'm sure it was."

That was a detail which might be important, for if a wanted man did turn out to be left-handed, this was the sort of detail which could help to build a case.

The detective examined the basin where the man had washed, but as the attendant had cleaned it, there were no blood stains which could be checked against those in the laboratory.

"I suppose quite a few people have used this basin since?"

But no one else had. And that one fact produced the lucky chance that every detective hopes will come his way.

Although the attendant had cleaned the basin, there was always the chance that fingerprints had been left behind somewhere. Within a quarter of an hour the fingerprint experts were in the lavatory. They could find nothing. But the Sergeant in charge of the fingerprint operations was a wily, astute man. In his experience there were nearly always prints to be found somewhere, unless a real professional crook had been at work. And both the Sergeant and the Inspector who were investigating the robbery did not think this was a professional job at all. So . . . there were almost certain to be prints somewhere. But it often took time to find them. And the Sergeant took his time before he spoke.

"Do you give a fresh piece of soap to each chummy who comes in here?" he asked the attendant.

Yes, he did.

"What happens to the used bits? Take 'em home?"

The used bits, as the Sergeant described them, were kept in a separate bin. Only a few people had washed their hands, and the attendant was able to identify the piece of soap.

"You positive that's it?" the Sergeant asked.

The attendant was positive.

"You swear to it? On oath?"

Yes, he could.

"Well just let me handle it. There might be chummy's dabs on it. You never know."

Looked at with a naked eye, the soap bore no traces of prints. But through his microscope the Sergeant saw an outline of some unformed prints.

"Latents," he said briefly, and wasted no more time at the lavatory. This small cake of used soap was now a valuable piece of evidence. He took it back to the Photographic Department.

Very little escapes the roving eyes of the wide range and variety of cameras which Britain's police forces now use. The prints on the piece of soap were brought up by the use of magnifiers, high-pressure mercury lamps, and spotlight cameras to reveal a perfect set of prints as clearly as if the owner had left impressions for the naked eye to see.

But there were no matching prints in the C.I.D.'s own collection. A check with the Fingerprint Department at Scotland Yard was equally unsuccessful, so the impressions on the soap were kept in the *Scene of the Crime* collection.

Meanwhile, other investigations and inquiries were being carried out. The uniform of the injured constable was sent to the physics department of the laboratory for examination. From the combination of grit, dust, and blood, minute particles of a brittle material were found. Under intense microscopic examination they were shown to be chips of paint, and it was certain that they were from the wing or some other part of the car. But until the car was found the chips of paint, like the fingerprints on the soap, had to remain in a file.

At this stage the C.I.D. turned to their "from information received" sources, which led them to suspect three young men, one of whom had already been convicted for larceny.

But only two of the men could be found when the C.I.D. interviewed them. Their friend was away, they explained; no, they couldn't say for sure where he had gone. No, they didn't own a car. One of them was a van driver by trade. Neither of the two showed any signs of a cut hand. Their alibis were checked. The C.I.D. went off to await results and the possible reappearance of the third man.

But the third man kept well out of sight. With his cut wrist he was, as they knew, the one who could definitely be identified. While he was hiding during the day, he spent his time repainting and spraying the car, so that it was now maroon instead of black. He made a good job of it, as indeed he should, for by trade he was a paint-sprayer. The number plates and road fund licence were replaced by those from another stolen car, so that the only identity it now had was its make, and as it was one of the most popular of all makes, it was unlikely to rouse any particular suspicion.

A few weeks passed. The stolen property from the raid had been disposed of, and as no more was heard of the C.I.D., the three young men were ready for another smash-and-grab job. It was a calculated risk. Without a doubt they would again be questioned by the C.I.D., so they prepared suitable alibis. They worked by night, chose a brief space of time when they knew the man on the beat would be absent, and then carried out the raid swiftly and efficiently. The next day the same two men were questioned by the C.I.D., but no suspicion could be directed against them. The detectives asked after their missing friend, and were told that he was away working, but they did not know where.

Encouraged by their successes they tried a third raid, but it was a total failure. The C.I.D. swooped with the speed of a gannet. But still the third man was missing, and so was the car. This time, however, the police were not waiting for the missing one of the trio. Their probing questions hemmed in the two harassed men. Nevertheless, the C.I.D. still lacked evidence which justified a charge.

As soon as the detectives had left, the two men got in touch with the third. The C.I.D., they said, were looking for a maroon car. They even had the number of it. The third man set about repainting it again; it was now dark blue. A new set of plates was obtained and a road fund licence to match them.

The C.I.D. were very interested in this car, but, as yet, they had no clue as to its whereabouts. The C.I.D. office had studied all the crime information which had been collected and collated on the dates when the three men were thought to have made their raids;

and that study revealed that there were no reports of stolen cars on two of those dates, or on any date immediately prior to the raids.

There was, however, a report of a black saloon car having been stolen two days before the first raid had been carried out. The car had not been found. If the men had stolen three cars to carry out each raid and then abandoned them—as is usually the practice—where were the reports of the abandoned cars?

All this pointed to there being one car only. But reliable witnesses on the third raid had obtained the number of a maroon car. It had a different number from the car which had been stolen just before the first raid. And it was a different colour too. More inquiries were made, and from Scotland came information that the number plates of the maroon car belonged to a vehicle which had been stolen nearly a year previously.

The C.I.D. intensified their search. Every likely known crook was questioned, cross-examined, and questioned again. The pressure grew to scorching point. Finally, an anonymous telephone message was received in the C.I.D. office. If, said the unknown caller, the police looked in a shed in a certain back street they would find a car.

The police did look.

It was not a black car, of course, nor a maroon car, but a blue one. The C.I.D. took it back and discovered that the engine number had been filed off the cylinder block.

Detectives are as solid and, outwardly at any rate, as unemotional a race as is to be found anywhere. But even the most experienced can become excited as the pack closes in for the kill. What had begun as a small smash-and-grab raid had grown into a major case. With one constable seriously injured, and two more raids, the local city newspapers had played up each raid to the full. Indignant letters to the editors had demanded action. Now it seemed that the police were on the point of taking action.

Important items, such as identification numbers on cylinder blocks and typewriters are, like fingerprints, more than skin deep. The cylinder block was sent to the Photographic Department where, under an infra-red camera, the original number was clearly

visible. And that number was the same as that of the engine of the black car which had been stolen a day or so before the first of the three raids.

Meanwhile, the C.I.D. kept a watch on that shed in the back street. Sooner or later someone must visit it. And that someone would certainly be the third man. He did visit it, and sooner rather than later; the very next day. He was taken to the police station for questioning and examination; and the most important part of that examination showed a recently-healed cut between the thumb and the wrist of the left hand.

The C.I.D. now had sufficient evidence to charge all three men, and the subsequent fingerprint check showed that the prints of the third man matched those found on the piece of soap. And a sample of his blood taken showed it to be in group B.

There was no doubt about the men's part in two of the raids. There remained, however, a lack of conclusive proof of the running-down of the policeman.

The nearside wing of the car was examined by spectrography, which is a combination of spectroscopy and photography. As most people know, or can remember from their schooldays, a spectroscope is an instrument for forming and analysing the spectra of rays. In its simplest form it consists of a collimating tube (for adjusting the line of sight), a prism, a small telescope, and a measuring apparatus in the form of a wavelength scale. When white light is passed through a prism, it is split up into light-rays of various colours, and these different colours each has a different wavelength. If the light-rays are thrown on to a screen, the seven colours which are shown are those of the rainbow or spectrum—violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, and red. If the light of the sun is split up, the spectrum which results shows a series of lines; these are caused by the properties in the sun.

This well-known, elementary fact of physics forms the basis of spectroscopy and the use of the spectrograph in forensic science. A substance or material to be analysed under the spectroscope is placed on the instrument's electrodes which vapourize it. Light or spectra is given off and split up by prisms. It is then photographed against a wavelength scale which is a record of all the known

elementary substances; all other substances are combinations of these substances.

Any material that emits light, no matter how minute, can be put under the spectroscope and compared. Thus parts of the car wing were compared with the minute flakes of paint which were found on the injured policeman's uniform; and they matched. Had it been necessary, the various coats of paint which had been used to disguise the car could have been analysed under the spectroscope. These, too, could have been broken down until it was shown that the one flake from the wing, the actual material of which it was made, was composed of two extra coats of paint, one maroon, the other dark blue, both of which covered the original black. If that car had been painted twenty or thirty times, the spectroscope could have analysed them down to the original colour.

This remarkable laboratory test provided the conclusive evidence which proved "beyond all reasonable doubt" that this was the car which had knocked down the policeman. And the other evidence from the "backrooms"—the latent prints, the blood tests, the infra-red probe of the cylinder block—had proved, also "beyond all reasonable doubt", that these were the men who had driven the car.

7

HIDDEN CLUES

IN the normal run of cases which are submitted to the laboratories, the ultra-violet and infra-red processes do most of the work.

Once again we can recall our schooldays to appreciate the use of these rays. Beyond the spectrum are invisible rays. Those at the red end—longer in wavelength—are the infra-red rays. Those at the violet end—shorter in wavelength—are the ultra-violet rays.

The ultra-violet lamp has a fluorescent effect, and can reveal marks which would otherwise remain permanently hidden, and they can be photographed for evidence. Erased laundry marks; forged or altered signatures on driving licences, letters, or wills; all these, and many others, are revealed by the ultra-violet lamp, ready for the camera to record—and perhaps for a jury or magistrate to convict. The crook himself can try to cover up by the use of home-made science; he might use domestic bleaching powder or dyes, but they will not defy the deep penetration of the ultra-violet rays which will pick up the original mark or object, make it fluorescent and show as brightly as if it were an illuminated sign.

In the Metropolitan Police laboratory I once saw the final result of a collaboration between a postman and his accomplice. The postman—that very rare example of dishonesty among a superlatively honest body of men—stole labelled parcels from his office. He gave them to his accomplice, who in turn had used an ordinary domestic bleach to destroy the name and address; these he replaced with his own, and he and the postman shared the proceeds.

This was, incidentally, one of those examples of petty crime which wastes time, causes trouble, and brings small rewards to the wrongdoer. Most of the parcels which the postman stole contained articles of no greater value perhaps than sweets or handkerchiefs. At no time did he and his accomplice really benefit from a

series of thefts which had taken place during a period of nine months. But it took another six months for the post-office detectives to suspect one particular postman. When their suspicions were confirmed they intercepted one parcel, had it sent to the laboratory, where the fraud was quickly discovered.

The infra-red process is no less remarkable. The infra-red lamps pierce the stubborn resistance of opaque objects, and as I have already shown, this process brought back to life the filed-off numbers on a cylinder block. A stolen typewriter can be identified by the same method. But, as it was not opaque, the label on the parcel which the postman stole was treated by the ultra-violet process. If that label had been on a packing case in a warehouse, and a thief had painted out the name and address, then the infra-red process could be used to detect the fraud.

The work of the forensic experts is not, of course, confined to photography. There are the biologists, whose analysis of fibres, plants, the bark of trees, seeds and other animal, vegetable or mineral substances can help the C.I.D. to solve the most baffling mystery. There are the chemists and physicists whose knowledge of metals, glass, explosives, poisons, drugs, medicines, paints and dyes is no less valuable. There are substances, such as dust, which require the expert knowledge of chemists, biologists and even mineralogists. The study of dust has become increasingly important in modern crime detection. And just how important can be gained from the fact that there are four main groups of dust—road, airborne, industrial, and occupational. The first two are self-explanatory; industrial dust is that which is caused by, or found in, particular industries; occupational dust may be described as industrial's twin, and is likely to be found only on people who are working in a particular industry, such as coal-mining or flour-milling.

A torn leg of an overall found near the scene of a crime is sent to the laboratory for analysis. If, for example, that analysis shows that almost all the dust on it is coal dust, then the C.I.D. know that their inquiries should be among coal heavers, miners or other people employed in the mines. There might, of course, be more than one type of dust, in which event more than one expert may

be required to analyse and classify each type. The result of such a minute, exact investigation could be that, although the trouser leg belonged to a coal miner, it was obvious that within the last twenty-four hours he had walked along a road. The same investigation might also reveal small vegetable substances mixed up with the dust, or under the biologist's examination, show that the owner of the trouser leg had been through a poppy field. It is this type of information which gives the C.I.D. a foundation on which to reconstruct a crime. The forensic laboratories rarely solve crimes. But the results of their work frequently lead the police to success.

* * * *

The variety of instruments and equipment which is used in the police and Home Office laboratories is unequalled, but no part of that equipment is more remarkable, or plays a more important part, than the different types of microscope. They are used by every one of the band of experts.

Two examples from many in the C.I.D. case-books show how vital the microscope can be. A man accused a food-manufacturing firm of having left a rat's hair in their product. He threatened to sue for damages, but the firm had the single hair microscopically analysed. This showed that the hair was that of a tame rabbit. As the man kept tame rabbits in his garden, a prosecution followed, with the result that he was convicted instead of compensated.

The second example is also another instance of something being created from virtually nothing. A woman was attacked in Soho, London, and left, almost unconscious, on the pavement. C.I.D. officers searched for clues, and found two short hairs. These apart, the only other indication of identity came from a witness who had seen a man near the scene of the attack, and dressed in a long overcoat. The hairs were sent to the Metropolitan Police laboratory, and under the microscope, they formed the basis of the identity of a man "who may be able to help the police in their inquiries". C.R.O., through the *Police Gazette*, and the other information sources, issued a description, which said that the wanted man was aged about fifty, fat, with dark hair, and had

probably been wearing a long overcoat. They also added that he had visited a barber's shop within the past week or ten days.

This build-up of an identity from the slenderest of clues is an instance of how the laboratory not only finds the information but also interprets and reconstructs it. In the first place, the examination showed the hairs to be from a man's head. If they had proved to be those of the woman, then the clues would have been useless, and another hit-and-run thug might have escaped. The hair was dark in colour and its condition suggested a man about fifty years old. But how did the laboratory deduce and interpret that the man was fat? The roots of the hairs showed signs of profuse, sudden sweating. It is a fact, and not an assumption, that fat, heavily-built people sweat freely. It is true, of course, that men and women of all sizes, weights and ages also sweat under sudden excitement, nervousness, and energy. But the type of sweat which the microscope showed as being at the roots of these two hairs, indicated that they belonged to a fat man.

With this information, together with the microscopic proof that the hair had been cut within the last week or ten days, detective constables, aids and plain clothes men began a long, patient, routine visit to barbers' shops. There are, in all, several thousand men's hairdressers' shops in the Metropolitan Police area, but the detectives began, as they always do when there is so wide a circle, in the centre and worked outwards. They went from Soho to Central London. They visited shop after shop, beginning their inquiries with "I am a police officer. I am making inquiries about a man who answers to the following description. . . . Can you remember cutting . . .?"

Remarkably, one barber did remember. The man was a regular customer. Yes, he would be about fifty, he was fat, he did wear a long overcoat, and he had been in the shop just over a week ago. The barber even knew his address.

The man was arrested, charged, and eventually sentenced, and so someone else was brought to justice because of the almost uncanny precision and skill which makes up the work of the laboratories. Luck, of course, was a valuable ally, as it must be. Had there been rain, or wind, or even a slight breeze, or if someone

had walked over the hairs, then those vital clues would never have been found; and it was luck, too, which made the barber know the man's address.

* * * *

Except for the one attached to the Metropolitan Police at the Yard, the other forensic laboratories in Britain are controlled by the Home Office. There are six of these, each one of which is available to the police of a particular region in the country. Although the Yard's laboratory does not belong to the Home Office, it is a regional centre for the police forces in the Home Counties, but because of its unique resources it is frequently consulted by other regional laboratories.

I first knew the Metropolitan Police laboratory when it was at Hendon. It owes its existence to that outstanding Commissioner of Police, Lord Trenchard, who was the Metropolitan Police head from 1931 to 1935. This shrewd, far-seeing man from the Royal Air Force, introduced several notable reforms to the Metropolitan Police in general and the Yard in particular; not all of them were popular or welcome, but the Forensic Laboratory is the greatest memorial to his time as Commissioner. Since then, Sir Harold Scott, Commissioner from 1945 to 1953, moved the laboratory to Scotland Yard itself. Although it had then been in existence for about twelve years, its resources were not being used by the C.I.D. to the extent that they should. By having it moved to the Yard, Sir Harold broke down what opposition still remained to scientists working with the police.

The idea of such an organization was received with considerable suspicion and even opposition when Lord Trenchard introduced it in 1934. He was then fifty-eight years of age, but as one who had been chiefly responsible for building the R.A.F., he had an alert, progressive outlook with a profound belief in, and a considerable knowledge of, modern science and technology.

He once told me that of all the police reforms which he thought were vital, the establishment of a Forensic Laboratory was the most urgent. Despite the opposition to the idea, Trenchard created it, saw it break through that opposition with the same sort of force

and pugnacity which was characteristic of the Commissioner himself. Although suspicion and opposition lingered among a few die-hards until Sir Harold Scott moved it to the Yard, the laboratory soon gained world-wide recognition. To-day, it stands supreme among the international police forces, and is an integral part of London's C.I.D.

Although it is a self-contained unit with a wide variety of scientists and other experts on its staff, the Metropolitan Police Forensic Laboratory uses a great deal of outside help, and particularly when it calls upon the Home Office pathologists, such as Dr. Keith Simpson and Dr. Donald Teare, to whose work I have already referred in this book. There is constant and considerable liaison between the Yard laboratory and the six Home Office establishments in the Provinces. Although these are general forensic laboratories, each one also specializes in one particular branch of forensic science. At Preston, for example, they are experts in poisons and blood; Nottingham is world-famous for its knowledge of dust, fibres, soils, tree barks, and seeds, while Birmingham specializes in pathology, and Cardiff spells defeat for the forgers of documents, cheques, and other people's signatures.

These laboratories do not exist merely to prove a person guilty. Indeed, many a case has never reached the court because the laboratories have proved that a suspected person could not have been involved. The services of the forensic experts are also available to the accused, and more than one counsel for the defence has made use of them. In the notorious Christie case, for example, the defence asked for the exhumation and examination of one of the dead women who had been associated with the accused man. The examination was made by the Metropolitan Police Forensic Laboratory, the same laboratory which had presented the Crown with a formidable dossier of information.

8

FLYING SQUAD

THERE are probably more inaccurate and highly-coloured stories told about the Flying Squad than of any other branch of police and detective work. According to some accounts, the Squad spends most of its time in dramatic, high-speed chases which end with the crooks' car being rammed at some unearthly hour in the morning.

The more sensational headlines which announce—"Flying Squad cars in 80 m.p.h. chase"—are seldom accurate; these pursuits through deserted streets and dark country roads are much more often made by the ordinary patrol cars than by the Flying Squad. The Squad does, of course, take part in high-speed chases, but comparatively rarely, and when they do they are seldom reported in the Press. The Flying Squad deliberately avoids publicity, since the object of its work is to operate as secretly as possible.

The title by which this *corps d'élite* is known was given to it because it was first organized as a mobile force of detectives who could move quickly, at very short notice, to deal with particular inquiries and cases. Unless there are special reasons to the contrary, the Squad does not handle routine crime, which is normally confined to an area and is the job of the Divisional detectives. The rare occasions when it does operate on a Divisional basis occur when it is necessary for detective work to be carried out by police officers who are unknown in a district.

Under the command of its Chief Superintendent, the Squad has more freedom of action and movement than any other branch of the C.I.D. It does, of course, have specific orders and special duties, but most of its work is in the nature of a roving commission, following up clues, inquiries and "information received". The vehicles which it uses do not resemble any other police cars, and their performances are highly secret.

The Humber Snipe and Wolseley cars which can be seen in London, with men listening to or talking over the radio, are not Squad cars. The Squad cars must look like any ordinary saloon car, for once they are recognized they cease to have any useful purpose and must be changed. But whatever make, or makes, are in service, they will have the same characteristics of all Squad cars. Their engines are specially tuned so that each vehicle can achieve a top speed of round about 100 m.p.h. with very quick acceleration. Whereas an aerial indicates the normal police car radio equipment, the two-way apparatus used specially by the Squad consists of powerful concealed batteries. Frequency modulation prevents the outside world from listening in.

Until it is obliged to go into fast-moving action then, there is nothing to distinguish the Squad car from any civilian make. If, however, circumstances force the crew to reveal themselves, a normally hidden "Police" sign may be illuminated in blue lights and drops into position at the top of the windscreen. A sudden clanging of a bell, also hidden, lets the world know that a chase is on.

In addition to the car types normally used by the Flying Squad, there are also the "Q" cars. These take their name from the mystery ships of the 1914-18 war which, disguised as merchant vessels, when attacked by the German navy, turned out to be fighting ships with guns and depth charges. The "Q" cars are not a normal part of the Flying Squad, but are available for use on special occasions. They are a miscellaneous collection of vehicles designed to resemble delivery vans, three-ton haulage lorries, brewers' motor drays, removal vans, breakdown units, private cars, taxi-cabs, and so on. Their task is to go on special missions to report by way of their secret radio sets; to watch, sometimes for days on end; and to track. They are, in fact, the eyes and ears of the Metropolitan Police in general, and of the Flying Squad in particular, but it is not the task of "Q" car crews to make arrests. Once their suspect or their objective is under observation, they track them and keep them in touch until further action is taken by some other branch of the Force.

The Flying Squad began its life in 1919, just after the 1914-18

war, with two ex-R.A.F. tenders and a membership of about a dozen specially selected detectives. Nearly two years later, two cars were added to the "fleet", and since then the Squad has grown until it now has a staff of about a hundred, and is fully-equipped. With the rapid increase in motor transport which followed the end of the war, it was inevitable that crooks who hitherto had relied on their two feet to take them about their business, should adopt a more modern form of locomotion. Crime and cars were now to go together. This meant that thefts and other offences could be carried out in a particular district and the crooks escape more easily as there were no mobile detectives available to follow them. Criminals, too, whose base lay many miles away, would drive to London to meet their accomplices, make their plans and then drive away. Although undercover sources may have given the C.I.D. information about these movements, they were powerless to keep track of them.

With the organization of the Flying Squad, the Metropolitan Police soon checked this development. From the very beginning it was given a free hand to follow up information, to use its initiative, and to be free to go wherever its inquiries might lead it, even well beyond the Metropolitan Police boundaries. Although the Squad has this free-lance roving commission, it works closely with the rest of the Force. Sooner or later, the result of a good deal of its work is dealt with by the Divisions or the Yard. The Squad does make arrests when necessary, but more often it presents the Yard or the Divisions with information upon which they can act.

Service with the Flying Squad is a much sought after privilege in the Metropolitan Police, and for this reason there are few vacancies. From time to time, however, changes become necessary when certain officers have become too easily recognizable. As a rule, this happens as a result of an officer having to give evidence in court, or being involved in a case which brings him out of the shadows into the searchlight of publicity. On those rare occasions, and only then, the member of the Squad ceases to be anonymous, and the major part of his value is lost. For this reason, service in the Squad is usually limited to a few years, and almost invariably,

when an officer moves elsewhere he is promoted. It is not just coincidence that the majority of Chief Detective Superintendents were once Flying Squad Chief Inspectors.

* * * *

If a job with the Flying Squad is a coveted one, it is also liable to be dangerous. The very nature of its work—ferreting and probing in the underworld—exposes it to dangers more often than some other branches of police work.

Two stories from the Flying Squad's case-book give an idea of the more dangerous aspect of its work.

The first is the story of Detective Sergeant Deans, a story of gallantry, devotion to duty, and calculated courage.

One day in 1947, a unit of the Flying Squad was going about its lawful business when it picked up information about a plot to rob a London bank. It was to be no ordinary stick-up-job, but a well-planned, organized operation with a savage, brutal attack on the manager as its starting point. Working quietly, and investigating discreetly, the Squad discovered that a gang planned to attack the manager of the Kentish Town branch of the Midland Bank, steal his keys, and then enter the bank to carry out the robbery. Already the gang were shadowing the manager to find out just how regular his habits were—how he went home and when he left the bank each night.

While the crooks watched the bank manager, Flying Squad detectives watched the bandits. This case presents an outstanding example of the need for detectives to be unrecognized, as indeed they very probably would have been if they had been local Divisional officers. And although the pickpocket mentioned in Chapter One maintained that a detective could be spotted anywhere, the Flying Squad, at any rate, has its own methods of keeping well in the shadows.

During their observation in Kentish Town it became reasonably clear to the detectives that the raid was to be in two phases. Some of the gang were to attack the manager, while the rest waited by the bank. Normally, this would not have presented any special problem, but it was known that they were desperate, dangerous

men, and orders had been given that the entire gang was to be arrested.

But as the gangsters were to be in two separated groups, it meant that the attack must be allowed to go on. Honest, peaceable citizens, however, cannot be exposed to deliberate attack, and a volunteer from the Squad was required to impersonate the bank manager. As it happened, Detective Sergeant Deans resembled him, and under the cover of an evening's darkness, he could easily be mistaken for him. Without hesitation, knowing precisely what risks he was taking, Sergeant Deans volunteered for the job. On several evenings before the attack, he left the bank and went to the manager's home. The ruse was successful, and the gang did not suspect that there had been a substitution. Each evening he was followed by two men. They were on the station platform, followed him into the train, and tracked him as he left the train near the manager's home.

It was learned that the raid was to take place on February 21st, and on that night, a bitterly cold one, Sergeant Deans locked the bank doors and left for the station. Once again two men followed him into the train, and continued to do so when he left it.

As he walked down the snow-covered footpath outside the station, a third man joined the other two. Deans walked steadily on and reached the road. Two of the men overtook him, while the other brought up the rear. As Deans crossed the road, he saw a van. By now there were four men, so arranged that there were two on either side of him.

Then the attack took place. One single blow on the head knocked him to the frozen ground, and further blows rendered him half-conscious. He was then picked up and put in the van.

But this was not the end of his ordeal.

He was gagged, bound, blindfolded, and the keys were taken from his pocket. The van travelled some distance along the ice-bound road before it pulled up. Deans was flung out and left by the roadside on a pile of snow.

The gang then drove off believing him to be quite unconscious. As soon as the sound of the engine had died away, Deans struggled out of the cord which bound his arms and ankles, took the

bandage from his eyes, and slowly and painfully crawled to a nearby house.

But he had done his job. His devotion to duty was in the great tradition of the British police force.

Meanwhile, at the Kentish Town bank, the other Flying Squad men were doing their job too. They waited anxiously for the return of the men who, they knew, had attacked their colleague. When a man walked up to the bank, he was arrested as he was about to unlock the doors. The remainder of the gang were arrested too, and in due course they received prison sentences ranging from three to seven years. Sergeant Deans received what was then the highest award which a police officer could have, the King's Police Medal for Bravery.

* * * *

The story of Detective Sergeant Deans is one in which the Flying Squad worked entirely on its own. The second story from the Squad's case-book, known as the Battle of Heath Row, is one of co-operation with the Divisional C.I.D.

The Battle of Heath Row resembles something which was part of the daily scene in pre-war Chicago, when gangsters were the kings of crime in the United States. Its boldness and ruthlessness have few equals in the annals of British police work.

Once again it was from "information received" that the police first heard about this daring project. Divisional Detective Inspector Roberts, of T. Division, Metropolitan Police learned that a raid was planned on the bonded warehouse at London Airport. The staff was to be drugged, a selection of the valuable goods in the warehouse was to be loaded into a lorry, and the gang were prepared to "shoot to kill" if anyone barred their way.

That was the bare outline of the plan when it was first brought to the D.D.I.'s notice. Undercover investigations were made to discover if any further details were available. The bonded warehouse was looked after by British Overseas Airways Corporation staff, and the raiders intended to drug the tea in the canteen. The bonded warehouse at London Airport is always a fabulous treasure house of customs goods, but the raid was being planned

to take place immediately after the arrival of bullion worth some £350,000 from the United States.

The news of this fantastic attempt was received about a fortnight before the bullion was due at London Airport. It is worth noting at this stage of the story that, although the Yard were, of course, advised about the raid, there was never any suggestion that the responsibility of handling it should be taken away from the Divisional C.I.D. The arrangements for combating the attempt remained in the hands of the Chief Detective Superintendent and his D.D.I., with the latter in immediate control.

Nevertheless, Inspector Roberts realized that additional help would be required, and the Flying Squad were called on to take part in the joint operation. A Squad team, under Chief Detective Inspector Lee, was selected for the task. The plans to foil the attempt were as elaborate as those of the raiders, and after consultation with the Divisional C.I.D., the Flying Squad, and B.O.A.C., they were completed down to the most minute detail. The Flying Squad officers, acting under Divisional orders, were to carry out the counter-attack on the raiders. On the night of July 28th-29th, 1948, the Squad disposed its forces. Ten detectives went to the bonded warehouse, which was a disused aircraft hangar just off the Bath Road entrance. Three of this party of ten were to take the place of the B.O.A.C. security officer and the two loaders who, as the raiders knew, would normally have been on duty that night. These three officers were, of course, dressed in B.O.A.C. uniform. The other seven detectives, under Chief Inspector Lee, hid in the warehouse ready to overcome the thieves once they were safely inside the building.

The rest of the Flying Squad were outside the warehouse, hidden in a B.O.A.C. van. They had two tasks in the operation. One was to move the van to block the escape route of the thieves' vehicle which would be backed up against the two sliding doors of the building. Their other task was that of a mobile reserve to reinforce their colleagues. Round the vast, wide perimeter of the Airport itself, other police cars and vans were ready to cut off any attempt which the thieves might make to escape in vehicles stolen from the Airport.

Again from "information received" it was learned that the raiders were due to arrive at about midnight, but some time before that the police were in position. It proved to be a long wait until a large van drove down the Bath Road, turned into the main gates and backed against the double doors of the bonded warehouse.

Seven masked men alighted from the van. They were armed with coshes, but if "information received" was correct, the waiting, watching Flying Squad men knew that there were guns in some of their pockets as well. In addition to the seven masked men, the driver of the van, dressed in B.O.A.C. uniform, waited by the door. He did not have a cosh, but held in his hand a no less useful and deadly weapon, the van's starting handle.

Two of the bandits entered the warehouse. After they had made a hurried reconnaissance, they signalled the other five to follow them. While this was happening, they were being closely watched by the unseen Chief Inspector Lee and his men, who realized that the gang were experienced thieves. They moved efficiently, swiftly, silently. No fingerprints or footprints were going to reveal their identities as each man wore gloves or socks to hide the tell-tale impressions.

But if Chief Inspector Lee and his men were unseen, the three Squad detectives who were masquerading as the security officer and the two loaders were clearly visible in the office which adjoined the entrance to the warehouse. Two of the raiders went into this office where they saw the disguised Squad men behaving as if they had drunk the drugged tea from the canteen. With an acting ability that would have done credit to the professional theatre, the officers gave a convincing and realistic performance of semi-conscious, comatose B.O.A.C. employees.

The two raiders, having kicked one of the detectives in the head to make sure that he was quite incapable of resistance, bound and gagged the three of them, took the keys of the safe, and gave them to one of the five men who were waiting outside the office. As the man was about to open the safe, Chief Inspector Lee led his men into action. With a warning shout to the effect that they were police officers, he headed the attack on the raiders. Meanwhile, three

Squad detectives, working to a pre-arranged plan, stood by the door ready to prevent the inevitable get-away attempt.

A savage, brutal fight followed. The weapons were the raiders' coshes, spanners, the iron bar, and a pair of heavy bolt-cutters; the police used their truncheons. The first real casualty was Chief Inspector Lee who was knocked unconscious with an iron bar. The three Squad men who had been guarding the doors were now involved in this desperate life-and-death struggle. The Squad officers were well aware that if they lost this battle their chances of being left alive were not hopeful. Four of the bandits were overcome and held, but the other three escaped through the doors where they joined the driver of the van still armed with his starting handle.

This was the moment for phase two of the operation to be put into effect, and the other Squad officers, who had been hiding in the B.O.A.C. van, tackled the three murderously-desperate raiders. One of them pulled out a gun, and the other two, who had dashed under their van, reappeared and attacked the police with the jagged edge of a broken bottle, a cosh, and the starting handle. But the courage and the natural toughness of the Squad men, together with the unarmed combat training which all policemen receive, were too much for the bandits, and they were overcome and arrested.

Some time later the men, having recovered from the severe injuries which the freely-used truncheons had caused, were sentenced at the Central Criminal Court to imprisonment which ranged from five to twelve years. Despite their meticulous planning they had overlooked one thing, and this gives the final ironic touch to the story of the Battle of Heath Row.

The bullion did not arrive that night. Bad weather over the North Atlantic, a factor which the thieves had not reckoned on, had delayed the flight until the next day.

It must not be thought that all the work of the Flying Squad is as sensational or as dangerous as that of the Heath Row case or of the case of Sergeant Deans. Much of it is routine work, patient inquiry and the passing on of information. Only rarely, then, do the Flying Squad men themselves become public figures, and only

when it is really necessary, or when they are specially assigned to do so, will they become involved in fights and desperate struggles. But when they do get involved they always justify the underworld's name for them—"the heavy mob".

But behind the Flying Squad, is an even more secret force. This is the Ghost Squad, the shadows in the background whose names and identities are known only to a very few people.

9

SHADOWS IN THE BACKGROUND

THE Ghost Squad, although it has no such official designation, was formed after the 1939-45 war, and, like the Flying Squad, it was created to meet a special set of circumstances which followed the end of the war.

Crime during the war, of course, continued to flourish in London and elsewhere in Britain, but to a large extent it was of a different type. There were still robberies, thefts, smash-and-grab raids and hold-ups—all of which were made easier by the black-out and the fact that Britain was short of regular policemen. Murders were still committed, and blackmail continued to flourish. But there was a remarkable decrease in what might be termed the routine crime, the comparatively minor offences which occupy the greater part of the C.I.D.'s work throughout the country. Many of the regular crooks went into the Services, as did the detectives who knew them and their haunts and habits.

The change of criminal pattern continued once the war was over. New versions of old crimes, and a new type of criminal, formed this pattern. There were the black market experts who exploited the nation's food, clothing, and other shortages. There were the forgers of food and clothing coupons and identity cards. And immediately after the war, crime suddenly took on a more violent, desperate, and dangerous aspect.

In pre-war days the great majority of crime, and the great majority of criminals, belonged to a recognizable pattern. Supported by their intimate local knowledge, their fingerprint departments, and criminal record offices, the police forces of Britain could trace nearly all the regular criminals. During and after the war, however, a considerable body of new crooks operated in Britain, and especially in the Metropolitan Police area. Scarcely any of the members of this body of crooks were the old familiar

faces, the men and women who were known locally or who had established records. Instead, there marched into the post-war crime world a brand new set of crooks, many of them thugs and desperadoes. Many of them, too, were Service deserters, refugees from the European countries, and demobilized men who thought it would be easier to make a living by crime than honest work.

A powerful, widespread outbreak of crime was fully expected by Scotland Yard and the provincial police. It is a natural sequence of a world war, but the extent and virulence of it surprised everyone. In pre-war days the armed criminal scarcely existed, yet in the immediate post-war days he threatened to become almost commonplace. And if there were not guns, there were coshes, razors, iron bars, gear-levers, broken bottles, and all manner of other weapons of violence.

But it was not only this violence which set the police so many problems. Some of the robberies and raids, especially those connected with jewels and mail bags, were being planned and carried out intelligently and efficiently. Newspapers wrote of "Master Minds Behind the Post-War Crime Wave". Much of this was exaggerated, but the master crook of fiction, who directed lesser minds to carry out his plans, did have a counterpart in fact.

The police were handicapped from the outset in this post-war battle against crime largely because these crooks were new, with no records. Fingerprints and criminal records could not be matched for a large number of the hitherto unconvicted crooks. Undercover contacts in the underworld were of comparatively little use, although the pre-war professional crook, and those who had resumed their life of crime since the war, were opposed to this new trend of violence.

A considerable portion of the immediate post-war violent crime and daring robberies was undoubtedly carried out by deserters, refugees and (to a very much smaller extent) ex-Service men, but this was only temporary. Within a year or so after the end of the war the hard-cased, brutal young thugs—who were too young to have been in the war—became the dangerous element.

When the thugs began to shoot civilians and police, there were suggestions, and in some quarters demands, that the police should

be armed. But it is a rock-like principle that Britain's policemen never normally carry arms. Indeed, it is only in the rarest and most exceptional circumstances that arms are issued; the only officers who carry revolvers regularly are certain Special Branch detectives, and even then this is confined to a few officers employed on particular tasks.

There is no question of any false bravado or heroics about this business of not arming the police. If the police were armed, the unique respect that exists between a policeman and the public would disappear. He would cease to be the "man next door", one of the people. The possession of a firearm, in place of his truncheon, would create a tragic barrier, and moreover, armed police inevitably means many more armed crooks.

Although there was something of a crime crisis in the immediate post-war period, there was no panic. But with the rapid and dangerous increase in crime, and with police strength lower than it had been for a long time—the Metropolitan Police were about 6000 short of establishment and the Force had its smallest total for sixty years—something urgent had to be done.

So far as the Metropolitan Police were concerned, the situation was made more difficult as the C.I.D. were still handicapped by the limitations which, as I mentioned in an earlier Chapter, had been imposed on contacts with the underworld.

It was the head of the Metropolitan Police C.I.D., Assistant Commissioner Ronald Howe, who made the first move to do something constructive about the crisis. To-day he is Sir Ronald Howe, and Deputy Commissioner.

He suggested, and in due course put into action, a plan whereby the C.I.D. should plant their own men and women in the underworld and so try to revive in a quite different form the old system of close contact of police with criminals. Under the old system, it will be remembered, the C.I.D. maintained their own personal and private contacts, and the crooks and other underworld "narks" always knew that the men to whom they gave information were C.I.D. officers. With a virtually "new underworld", and many unknown factors at work in it, the C.I.D. were suffering from lack of first-hand information.

Ronald Rowe's idea was both startling and revolutionary, and it meant, in effect, that the C.I.D. would have its own informers, or, to put it more politely, its own secret service. This idea was not at first received with any enthusiasm, and the fact that he had not been a professional policeman did not make his task any easier. A man with a fine academic record, he had been a barrister on the staff of the Director of Public Prosecutions, and his outstanding work there led to his promotion to Chief Constable of the C.I.D. He had thus never pounded a beat, taken part in any practical detective work or been trained at any Police College. On the face of it, this lack of any sort of professional experience scarcely indicated a successful C.I.D. Chief, which is what he became.

Encouraged by the then Commissioner, Sir Harold Scott, who also had never been a policeman, Ronald Howe put his plan into action, and so the Ghost Squad, the shadows in the background, came into being.

Although the Ghost Squad is the accepted name with the Press and general public, officially it is the unseen and comparatively unknown part of the Flying Squad. Indeed, it was one of Howe's original principles that this new force should be unknown even to the Flying Squad, and certainly when the first Ghost men and women went out on their early assignments, not more than half-a-dozen people in the entire Metropolitan Police knew who they were or what they were doing. Some of the sensational reports about the work of the Squad to-day suggest that this strict anonymity still exists, but this is not true. Anonymity does exist to a considerable degree, but it is no longer true to say that no member of the Flying Squad, for example, ever has known a member of the Ghost Squad. Neither is it true to say that members of the Ghost Squad are identified only by a code sign which he or she uses in any conversation on the telephone or in a report as a means of identification. Code signs and all sorts of other devices are used to keep the work and identities secret, but it is obvious that there must be personal contacts between the shadows in the background and senior police officers when something has been discovered which demands action by another branch of the Force.

Reports and second-hand conversations are all very well, but

the work of the Ghost Squad is primarily to find out not only what is going on but also what is likely to happen; there must be conferences with the senior officers who will take over the case once the facts have been reported.

This legend of absolute anonymity and secrecy has persisted ever since the Squad was formed in 1946. Only recently I read a highly-inaccurate, highly-coloured account of its work in an American magazine which is normally world-famous for its accuracy. The story carried the title—"Undercover Whisper Sends Safe-Blow Gang for Seven-Year Stretch". The writer went on to tell of a Ghost Squad detective: "with one eye on the sidewalk he called police headquarters at Scotland Yard. 'A.R.—57 calling, safe-blow boys plan to do a job along the Great West Road tomorrow night'. And with that cryptic message the voice of a Ghost slipped out of the call box to resume his work as one of the Yard's anonymous links with London's underworld."

Ghost Squad detectives could report like that and give the briefest details of a plan. On rare occasions they do report like that. In this story in the American weekly magazine the police chief to whom the Ghost detective had spoken was presumed to have acted on this slender information, found out which of the many buildings on the Great West Road had safes in which money was kept, hid Flying Squad detectives nearby and overpowered a safe-breaking gang as soon as it had occupied the building. He never knew who the detective was who gave him what the writer describes as "the squeal".

If a Ghost Squad detective had really picked up the information so long in advance that he could warn the Yard that the safe was to be blown "tomorrow night", he would be much more likely to report the facts personally to a senior police officer and give him as much detailed information as possible. No detective worth his job would fail to follow up a tip about a safe raid without substantiating it with all the details he could discover: and then he would discuss the matter personally with a senior officer at the Yard or with a Divisional Chief. The American writer, however, wanted to make the point that Ghost detectives worked on their own, isolated and cut off from police headquarters and their

families for weeks at a time. That could happen, too, and has happened, but it is not a normal part of the Ghost Squad's duties.

Despite the imaginative, romantic, highly-coloured stories which are told about the Ghost Squad, its work is nearly all concerned, if not with secret missions, at least with spending all their duty hours with crooks and in places where crooks are likely to be found. The entire success of their job depends on their remaining anonymous to the underworld; for that reason the fewer people who know their identity the better.

From the beginning, Assistant Commissioner Ronald Howe had clear and definite ideas about the type of men and women he wanted for this new, exclusive force. They must be volunteers, and look as little as possible like policemen and policewomen. Candidates, too, must be men and women who could mix in any class of society, appear in the enclosure at Ascot as if their whole life was spent in such surroundings, use night clubs and fashionable restaurants and look as if they belonged there. Some, too, would be expected to move just as easily in other walks of life, to mix with the less fashionable inhabitants of the racecourse, to be part of the crowds that use the big, popular dance hall, and to be able to move about the public houses, cafes, restaurants and other haunts used by London's foreign population. For the women candidates the qualifications were particularly difficult, as some would have to mix with prostitutes and pimps and act as hostesses in clubs and dance halls of every description.

All this meant that the candidates must be people with a variety of interests. Some, of course, would have to be specialists, although Ronald Howe did not want anyone to be too set in their ways or habits. Nevertheless, he looked for men and women whose background, character, and interests made them a natural choice for a particular type of work. In other words, the man or woman who was to be at Ascot and in the night clubs was unlikely to be the man or woman who would mix equally well with the refugees and other members of London's foreign population.

The Metropolitan Police is more cosmopolitan and versatile than any other in the world, and it was not difficult for Ronald Howe to select men and women who could fit in to one or other of

the desired backgrounds. But it was difficult to find men and women who could fulfil all the qualifications. These included, of course, the normal characteristics of every police officer, initiative, courage, intelligence, and alertness—and developed to a very high standard.

Throughout the formation of what has become known as the Ghost Squad, Ronald Howe superintended its creation personally. And the final selection of the first group, about thirty men and women, were all chosen and interviewed by him. Everything that would be necessary for their particular tasks was made available to them—the right clothes, cars, money for entertaining, and so on.

With all this, and the knowledge that they were an exclusive and unique body of men and women, the Ghost Squad went into action. Their duties could not be clearly defined except that they were to work on the general principle of giving the police advance information about crimes which were being planned. Although that remains their main object, the undercover men and women were also used to follow up crimes and so bring to justice crooks who thought they had escaped.

To-day the Ghost Squad is everywhere, and nowhere.

The work is always exacting, sometimes exciting, and occasionally dangerous. Ghost detectives are expert linguists, know enough about pictures and jewellery to maintain an intelligent conversation with thieves and forgers, can discuss in detail the prospects of race-horses and greyhounds with the nobblers whose business it is to interfere with animals, or even to substitute them so that a horse or a dog running under one name is in fact an entirely different animal. The public often wonders how it is that one person out of hundreds who tries to pass through the Customs at airports and seaports is selected by a Customs Officer to be searched. British Customs Officers seldom choose people at random to be searched unless they have sufficient cause to suggest that they are carrying contraband. Sometimes it is a Ghost Squad detective who has warned the Customs, or the Customs own undercover men and women, that a woman travelling from Switzerland has ten watches concealed in her underclothes; or that the mink coat which the fair-haired, middle-aged woman is wearing was

bought while she was out of England and is now being smuggled in.

Because the Ghost Squad is the secret service of the police the details of its work must remain secret. Most accounts of the Squad which purport to give the results of its work are speculative and mostly highly imaginative. No one at the Yard will discuss them. And those people who know their way about the Yard, know too, that it is wiser not to ask questions. But in the private and confidential archives of the Yard are the records of gaol breaks, lorry thefts, mailbag robberies, and a host of other crimes which have either been foiled because the "eyes and ears" of the Yard have seen and heard in good time, or have been solved as a result of "information received" from the Ghost Squad itself.

But the methods they used, the risks they ran, and the names of the men and women employed, remain in the secret archives.

10

SPECIAL BRANCH

THERE are as many misconceptions about the work of the Special Branch as there are about the work of the Flying Squad or the Ghost Squad. Although their duties are frequently associated with M.I.5 (or more popularly the Secret Service), and even more so in war-time, Special Branch officers are not secret agents or spies. The Branch is a highly-specialized part of the C.I.D., and like the Flying Squad and the Ghost Squad, it is a *corps d'élite*, and a great deal of its work is secret. But Special Branch men are policemen who have begun their careers as constables on the beat, and have subsequently become specialists in the same way that other policemen have become fingerprint, forgery, fraud, and other types of specialists.

The police of other countries have their equivalent of the British Special Branch. Many of them, however, are secret police who work to the orders of the State and resemble the one-time Nazi Gestapo. In this country, members of the Special Branch are also concerned with politics, but the men who belong to the Branch have no powers of arrest or search or detention or cross-examination that are different from those of any other policeman.

In war-time, of course, emergency regulations can provide them with powers which they do not normally possess.

The Special Branch has two main duties; the first is the protection of Royalty, Ministers of the Crown, former Ministers (if they should need protection), Heads of States and politicians from overseas; and the second task is to watch for any political activity which might be dangerous, lead to sedition, riot, or serious disorder. Although it is not directly responsible for their control, the Special Branch is always very closely associated with arms and explosives, the entry, movement, registration and deportation of

aliens, requests for passports, naturalization, and permits for firearms.

All this does not mean that every foreigner who wants to live or stay in Britain, or who wishes to become naturalized, is subject to a searching, secret inquisition; inquiries are made, of course, but compared with the excessive precautions taken (no doubt necessarily) in some other countries, they are reasonable enough. Neither does this mean that the normal request for a passport requires Special Branch scrutiny. But there are some passport applications which do need investigation, and it would be the Special Branch which would carry it out.

Special Branch officers are on duty at those seaports, docks, harbours, and airports which have international passenger traffic and a few officers serve at Continental ports as well. As I shall show in the next Chapter, this port duty is as old as the Branch itself.

One of the most responsible and onerous tasks which the Special Branch has to carry out is the security work when foreign monarchs, Heads of State, and top-rank diplomats visit Britain. Although this is always a heavy responsibility, the extent of it depends on the type of visitor and the country from which he or she comes. The arrival of the Queen of Holland or the King of Sweden, for example, obviously causes fewer problems than did the arrival of Marshal Tito, because the political problems of Yugoslavia are complex and full of dangerous possibilities.

When the Head of a State or a leading diplomat from a "trouble-spot" country is to visit Britain, the security precautions begin some time before his arrival. A check is made on all the aliens who normally live in Britain and who have any associations with the country from which the visitor is arriving. A discreet, and sometimes secret, watch is kept on their movements until the visitor has left. These aliens may be followers and supporters, or they may be people who are known to be opposed to him and his country's policy. The chief problem which the Special Branch has to face is not only one of protecting the visitor from attack or assault from the opponents, but it is also to see that all untoward incidents are avoided.

The visit of Marshal Tito to Britain in 1953 was a notable example of the responsibilities which the Special Branch must assume, and of the security precautions which must be taken.

Of all the distinguished foreign visitors who have ever arrived in Britain—some of them have come at grave moments of crisis in their country's affairs, some have been marked men—none has been given the elaborate and excessive security as that which was given to Marshal Tito. His mission was not only extremely delicate, but it was also of the highest diplomatic and international importance. It was imperative that nothing should go wrong.

The security precautions began about four months before he was due to arrive. This time it was not only a matter of checking on all Yugoslavs who were in Britain, but also of all Balkan and many other European aliens who were known or suspected to have political sympathies or interests. But the checking and security supervision did not stop at this.

Marshal Tito's policies had brought opposition in many quarters. Although he was a Communist and his was a Communist country, Yugoslavia's relations with Soviet Russia were strained. This meant that a close watch had to be kept on the supporters of Russian Communism. There were also the Italians, who were angry with Yugoslavia in general and Marshal Tito in particular, over his Trieste policy. The danger from most of these people was that they might stage demonstrations.

But the danger from other Yugoslavs could be graver than that.

And so, as the end of 1952 approached, Special Branch detectives carried out elaborate checks from a long list of aliens who were living in Britain. Gradually, as the weeks passed and the date of Marshal Tito's visit grew nearer, a cordon was placed round those aliens who were thought to require special supervision. It was not a physical cordon, but a discreet yet subtly sharp watch on everyone's movements.

So much, then, for the internal security. There remained the problem of aliens who were entering the country during this critical period. The number of Special Branch officers at the airports and seaports was increased, as were the immigration staff. Interpol (the International Police Criminal Commission), and the

Jugoslav Government, maintained a check over a large area of Europe and warned the Special Branch and M.I.5 (who were closely associated with the Branch) of any doubtful or suspected undesirable aliens who were on their way.

With the aliens at home and abroad under control, or so it was hoped, the question of Marshal Tito's personal security had to be dealt with. He was to arrive at Westminster Pier after a trip up the River Thames from Greenwich. Until the Marshal had passed, all bridges were to be shut to the public and closely guarded by Special Branch and uniformed constables. An intercommunication system from the river to police control would send a commentary on the progress up-river so that the bridges would have to be cleared and closed only for the shortest possible time.

A river route was chosen not because it was a picturesque and ancient way of arriving in the Capital, but because it was the safest, as arrival by air would have meant a long road journey into the heart of London. There were, of course, risks even in this, as ships from several countries were moored along the river highway. In Britain, police guards are not placed in vessels, or their crews ordered to remain ashore, so a careful check was made of all ships which would be lying along the route that day. The Thames Division of the Metropolitan Police were to maintain a constant patrol, with a roving eye on all riverside vantage points on the route up-river.

Westminster Bridge was to be closed for a longer period than any of the other bridges because it overlooked Westminster Pier, where the Marshal was to disembark. Plans were made to shut the public off from the area of the Pier, and only a limited number of newspapermen and Press photographers were to report the actual disembarkation at close quarters. For the first time London was to see motor-cycle "police cops"; a specially-formed section was to provide the Marshal with a high-speed bodyguard to accompany his car. And perhaps the most fantastic part of what, from British standards, was a most fantastic story, was the fact that the car was bullet-proof.

All the arrangements for the visit were kept secret, and an announcement of the arrival date was delayed as long as possible.

Even so, the Special Branch discovered that there were unauthorized people in London who knew it. Then the date was changed.

Another major problem which had to be settled was that of a suitable place for the Marshal to stay during his visit. The policing of this before and during the tour would be mainly a job for the Special Branch. Finally, White Lodge in Richmond Park was selected. It was to be guarded throughout every twenty-four hours by armed police patrols and police dogs. Mobile searchlights were to stand by ready to floodlight a large area near White Lodge.

To the ordinary Londoner, these security precautions seemed to be excessive, and more like a sensational fiction story of Balkan espionage. But it was known that there was a real danger of an assassination attempt, and the Prime Minister himself was deeply anxious about the visit. The precautions which were taken, however, were small compared with those which were requested by the Yugoslav Government. These included even more elaborate safety plans in buildings which faced any route which the Marshal would take, and armed troops were required to line certain routes at certain times, with each soldier alternately facing back and front.

It was explained to representatives of the Yugoslav Government that public opinion in Britain would be utterly opposed to such excessive precautions, and they were persuaded to modify their demands and to abandon some of them altogether.

As it was, there was a considerable risk of offending public opinion. There were, for example, serious misgivings about the closing of the bridges, and particularly about keeping people a considerable distance away from Westminster Pier. In the end, however, tact by the Commissioner of Police, the Special Branch and M.I.5 officers, together with British commonsense, won the day.

The exclusion of a number of newspapermen and Press photographers, was a real potential trouble-maker. Every newspaper had an equal right to be there, as had the B.B.C. units and the newsreel cameramen. No one seriously thought that Fleet Street reporters, for example, were secret anarchists, or that the camera flashlights could turn into a bomb. But there were many other

perhaps less reliable applications, and in any event, no crowds of any kind were wanted on or near Westminster Pier.

Once again, tact and commonsense prevailed, and the freedom of the Press was preserved when the newspapers, news agencies, and the newsreel companies agreed to a selected number being present, with the story and pictures to be pooled.

It was said that Marshal Tito did not care for crowds of reporters and photographers near him. No doubt that was true, but it also provided a tactful, face-saving excuse to thin out the reporters and photographers.

Except for a smoke-bomb which was thrown into the crowd nearest to Westminster Pier—an event which not even the most sensational reporter could make into a story—Marshal Tito's visit was genuinely uneventful. Londoners enjoyed their glimpses of the plump, jolly, benevolent-looking figure in uniform. They thought it fun to see the motor-cycle patrol take up position and then accelerate into action. They thought it even greater fun when they saw the Marshal's picturesque-looking personal bodyguard almost glide like spies of fiction to precede him to the bullet-proof car.

I have one vivid memory of the visit. As the Marshal came out of the Ministry of Defence his bodyguard glided to the door of his car. The Marshal said goodbye to the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, all three of whom had walked down the steps. The Marshal stepped into the bullet-proof car and the bodyguard slammed the doors. Sir Winston Churchill and Sir Anthony (then Mr.) Eden waved to him as the motor-cycle patrol accelerated, rode into position, and the cavalcade moved off. Sir Winston and Sir Anthony turned away. The crowd divided. The two great statesmen strolled back to Downing Street, not more than a hand's touch from the people. There were no security guards, but only Sir Winston's personal Special Branch detective, whom I saw following at a discreet distance.

11

ANARCHISTS AND ASSASSINS

ALTHOUGH the Special Branch has had many more eventful and even violent episodes in its long history, it has never had a greater security task than that for the visit of Marshal Tito.

That history began in 1886 as a result of bomb and other incidents carried out in London by the Irish Republican Brotherhood. This terrorist body was determined to force the British Government to grant Home Rule to Ireland. Their activities had begun some years earlier, but it was these later acts of violence which were to lead to the formation of the Special Branch.

Outrage after outrage was carried out, one of the most serious being a gunpowder explosion in Clerkenwell. A street of houses was blown to pieces, and the wreckage, as well as the dead and wounded lying about, resembled an air raid incident of more than seventy years later. This was followed by other explosions, but the police were unable to make any arrests as there was never any trace of the terrorists. And no one talked. The oath of secrecy taken by the members of the Brotherhood was as binding as that taken by the Mau Mau. To break it meant certain death. No one did break it.

More plain clothes men were put on to tracking down the terrorists, and to discovering how and when they reached England from Ireland. Apparently this incessant detective work had some effect, for the attacks died down, but they reached a crisis point again in 1883, and continued to shock England for the next two or three years. Meanwhile, the Criminal Investigation Department of the Metropolitan Police had been formed.

So violent were the incidents, and so heavy the loss of life, that an alarmed House of Commons rushed through in a single day an Act to deal with the growing menace. But it had little effect. On March 15th, 1883, there were two explosions, one in *The Times*

newspaper office, which did little damage; another was on Westminster Bridge which caused heavy damage but no loss of life.

More serious incidents were to follow.

About seven months later there were two more outrages, again on the same day, and both on the underground railway; in one of them more than sixty people were injured.

Despite an intensified search by the C.I.D., no trace of the terrorists could be found; there were several suspects, but no evidence. In the following year, more incidents took place, culminating in the most daring during all the years the Brotherhood had operated. Late in the evening of May 30th, 1884, a heavy explosion took place in Scotland Yard itself. It caused considerable damage, and several detectives and police officers escaped death by only a few minutes.

Public alarm grew, and there was considerable criticism of the inability of the Metropolitan Police to do anything positive to stop the outrages. Despite widespread searches and investigations, no trace could be found of the real leaders or operators. The Government decided that Irishmen were better equipped to deal with Irishmen, and members of the Royal Irish Constabulary were brought to London.

In those days the R.I.C. were almost as famous a police force as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and the London contingent, known as the special Irish Branch, were an impressive and striking-looking body of men. They were big, tall, and tough, and they were armed. At first London greeted them as welcome recruits to the battle against the terrorists, but there was a good deal of misgiving about having armed police in the Capital. Moreover, jealousy developed between the Metropolitan Police and the R.I.C. The scheme was a failure and the Irishmen returned home. The section of the C.I.D. was retained, however, and has been known ever since as the Special Branch.

The Special Branch was soon investigating a new series of violent bomb outrages. An unsuccessful but none the less alarming attempt was made to blow up London Bridge. A month later there was a shattering explosion in the Crypt of the House of Commons. Much more damage would have been caused but

for the cool courage of a policeman. Although he had been wounded by the explosion, he carried a load of explosives out of the building; for this act of bravery he was awarded the Albert Medal.

By persistence and good intelligence work, the Special Branch ultimately played a decisive part in tracking down the Irish gangs. It was established that the dynamiters came from America as well as from Ireland. Many of the Irish emigrants in the States were actively sympathetic with the Home Rule cause, and men as well as money arrived from across the Atlantic. Ports such as Liverpool became the dynamiters' rendezvous, and in these the Special Branch placed officers in an attempt to break up the gangs before they could put their plans into action. This port duty began as a temporary measure to meet a specific emergency, but it proved so valuable that it became a permanent part of Special Branch work. It took a long time to rid London of the Irish gangs, and the job was scarcely done when a new type of dynamiting terrorist arrived in the Capital to emulate the Irish.

These were anarchists. Most of them were revolutionaries from overseas countries; they were acting either as agents, or were themselves engaged in feuds and vendettas, but only a few were working for anarchy or revolution in Britain. All had learnt well from the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and they were quick to take advantage of any weakness on the part of the Government. There were attempts to blow up Queen Victoria and members of her Government during the celebrations of the Golden Jubilee in 1887. For the next ten years the Special Branch was almost constantly on the track of anarchists from Italy and on Italians who were already in this country. There were also those from Spain, South America, Russia, and the Balkans, and again from Ireland.

As with steps taken against the Brotherhood, and the Irish Republican Army which succeeded it, progress was slow, but it was certainly sure. The anarchists went out with the biggest and most serious explosion of all when, in 1897, a bomb exploded in an underground train causing many injuries, and one fatal casualty. After that the violence stopped, but anarchists in one

form or another, continued to cause the Special Branch constant trouble.

Since all anarchy has some political association or background, and since the greater part of it has its roots in foreign countries, and particularly Europe, the Special Branch built up a vast store of specialized knowledge and experience. Anarchy, of course, is one of those terms which can cover a wide variety of activities. The Special Branch's search for secret meetings, arms, and explosives, led them to several other improvements which were organized under the name of anarchy.

During the years immediately prior to the 1914-18 war, increasing numbers of Germans were meeting, if not in secret, at least in suspicious circumstances. Very few Germans were genuine anarchists, so these meetings were clearly being held for other reasons. The British Intelligence Service had been keeping a close watch on certain other German activities in Britain, as a result of which the Special Branch were convinced that these regular meetings of Germans were for the purpose of espionage. They were not big-time spies, these bakers, musicians, waiters, cooks, teachers, and others, but tiny cells which could multiply rapidly.

A constant check was kept on their activities and movements by the Special Branch, but scarcely any arrests were made until August 4th, 1914, when war was declared on Germany. By then the Special Branch had its organization so well planned that it was able to make no fewer than 400 arrests, and this broke up one of the most dangerous spy rings that has ever threatened Britain's safety.

This did not mean, of course, that Britain was free of spies during the war itself, but the Special Branch's long and patient counter-espionage work dealt a decisive blow to the German plans for a small army of spies to go into action on the night of August 3rd-4th, 1914.

Among the most dramatic cases in which the Special Branch was involved in the 1914-18 war was an attempt to poison Britain's war-time Prime Minister, Mr. Lloyd George, and Mr. Arthur Henderson, a member of the War Cabinet.

This sensational murder attempt provides an example of fact being stranger than fiction.

The central figure in the drama was a woman who kept a second-hand dress shop in Derby. Some time before she was involved in the plot to murder the Prime Minister, she had been under observation by the Special Branch as she was known to have hidden Army deserters and others who were evading military service. From the time that she had first been suspected she was known to have strong anti-British views.

At what stage the Special Branch and M.I.5 were aware of the plot against the Prime Minister and Mr. Henderson is not known, but on the evening of Boxing Day, 1916, an M.I.5 agent knocked at the door of the second-hand dress shop. His name was said to have been Alec Gordon. But was that his name? Did Alec Gordon really exist? Or was it an undercover name for someone else? Whoever he was, or whatever he was, his visit was a fateful one.

When the door was opened he introduced himself to the owner of the shop as an Army fugitive and a member of the Independent Workers of the World. He was allowed in, and he was very soon very much at home. After a while, he learned of the plot to assassinate Lloyd George and Arthur Henderson. Fantastic though the plot appeared, there was no doubt about its seriousness. Gordon, it is said, reported the facts to his superior, an M.I.5 agent, named Booth. He, too, arrived at the shop in Derby, and is believed to have been introduced by Gordon as another fugitive and a fellow member of the Independent Workers of the World.

The woman told Booth or Gordon (or both of them) that Lloyd George "has been the cause of millions of innocent lives being sacrificed. He shall be killed to stop it." She added that Henderson "was a traitor to the working classes", and deserved a similar fate. She described a previous attempt to kill the Prime Minister, when someone had obtained employment at an hotel where he was due to stay, with instructions to drive a poisoned nail through the sole of Lloyd George's boot. This plot had failed because the Prime Minister had cancelled his visit to the hotel.

It soon became clear to Gordon or Booth, or both of them, that the woman not only knew a great deal about fatal poisons, but

was also in a position to obtain rare and deadly samples. The Special Branch worked quickly, and discovered that the woman's son-in-law was a chemist in the South of England and a lecturer on poisons. More detailed investigations revealed that this man was something of a specialist in one of the poisons which Gordon and/or Booth knew was to be used to kill the two politicians.

As a result of the investigations, Special Branch and M.I.5 discovered the day on which the poisons were to be sent to Derby by the woman's son-in-law. This was confirmed by Gordon or Booth. One or the other of these agents, or both of them, were told by the woman that the poison phials were being sent to Derby, and that they were to carry out the assassinations. Because the woman suspected that her correspondence had been opened, the more recent letters between herself and her son-in-law were sent by rail in fish-baskets to Derby. All the correspondence was in code.

The basket containing the poison phials, together with coded instructions for their use, was sent the same way, but addressed to the woman's relatives in Derby, who were not connected with the plot in any way.

The parcel was eventually delivered by hand to the second-hand dress shop. It had, however, already been diverted on its journey, its contents analysed, and the instructions decoded.

There were four phials. One contained $7\frac{1}{2}$ grains of strychnine to be given through the mouth or in solution, and used on bread or meat, $\frac{1}{2}$ grain being enough to cause death. The second phial contained a solution of strychnine, which was to be used through the mouth or by injection, and $1\frac{1}{4}$ grains of this would be fatal.

These two phials were presumably to be used only if the more certain and more deadly poisons in the other two phials could not be administered. The poison in these was curare, an arrow poison once favoured by the Indians in British Guiana and by other savage tribes.

Apart from its effects, the main difference between strychnine and curare was the fact that there was then no antidote for curare which could be obtained immediately. An analysis of these two curare phials showed that one was prepared for injection in solu-

tion by a needle, or by a dart rusted in solution and covered by a powder. The other phial contained curare in solution and was intended for injection only.

The decoded instructions showed beyond doubt that a dart, fired through an airgun, was to be used; if for any reason that failed there remained the alternatives. The woman's son-in-law, who had written the instructions and prepared the poisons, wrote that the curare dart would kill in twenty seconds. The woman told Gordon and/or Booth that the Prime Minister was to be shot by an airgun containing poisonous darts at Walton Heath, in Surrey, where he had a house, and played golf.

Enough evidence had now been obtained. As soon as the basket had been delivered to the shop, the Special Branch arrested four people: the woman, her daughter who lived with her, the woman's other daughter who was married to the poison expert, and the poison expert himself.

On March 31st, 1917, just three months after the investigations had begun, all four stood their trial at the Central Criminal Court.

The case for the defence was that the mysterious Alec Gordon had asked for the poison to kill police dogs which were guarding detention camps where conscientious objectors (whose claims had been rejected by the Tribunals) and aliens were detained and interned. This plank in their defence was soon destroyed by counsel for the Crown who produced evidence to show that no dogs were used at this particular camp. Nevertheless, the accused stuck to their story, and their counsel even argued that there was no onus on his clients to prove whether dogs were used or not, as they were only concerned with what they had been told by Alec Gordon.

And then the Judge asked a question which proved to be one of the most decisive in the entire trial. The woman's son-in-law said that his coded instructions, which indicated that the poison would be effective in twenty seconds, was a mistake. He meant to have written twenty minutes. Nothing has a more marked effect on a jury than a contradiction such as that. But, of course, there *was* a possibility that the man could have made such a mistake, especially if he were working anxiously under strain.

And then the Judge put his question.

What was the point, he asked, of giving an attacking dog a poison which would take as long as twenty minutes to kill it?

There was no answer to that significant question.

There remained the last plank in the defendants' case, Alec Gordon himself. But he could not be found. No one except the accused knew, apparently, of his existence. Who was he? What was he? Where was he? Booth and other M.I.5 people gave evidence. But not Alec Gordon.

The defence quite properly asked for him to be brought in as a witness for cross-examination. An M.I.5 officer was interrogated in court. He said vaguely that although he was indirectly responsible for having employed Gordon, he had never met him, and that he was Booth's responsibility. But Booth did not know where he was, although he admitted that a man named Alec Gordon had been employed by him.

Defending counsel insisted that Gordon's presence in the court could prove his clients' innocence. The jury, however, were not convinced of Gordon's importance, and after a trial lasting ten days, they found three of the defendants guilty on the charge of conspiring to murder Lloyd George and Arthur Henderson. The woman was sentenced to ten years' penal servitude, and her son-in-law and his wife, after a recommendation to mercy because of their youth, received sentences of seven and five years' penal servitude respectively. The other daughter was acquitted.

The defence took the case to the Court of Criminal Appeal on the grounds that Gordon's absence had caused a miscarriage of justice. Despite long legal arguments and an able, eloquent plea by counsel, the appeal was dismissed.

There were two curious sequels to this strange and bizarre case.

The first occurred a few months later. A Government statement was made in the House of Commons. It said that Alec Gordon had not been employed by the Government since January, 1917. Only Booth himself, who died in 1952, and possibly half a dozen other people in M.I.5 and the Special Branch, ever knew of the true relationship between Booth and Gordon. Booth, whom I met not long before he died, would not discuss that vital part of the case.

Every known record of it, and every inquiry which I have made, points to the fact that Booth took entire charge of the investigation on a date between December 26th and December 31st, 1916. Gordon communicated with Booth, or so it was said, about three days after he had knocked on the door of the shop in Derby.

Some authorities maintain that Gordon was prominent for some time after that, and that it was he and not Booth who did most of the work that led to the arrests. It is almost certain, however, that Alec Gordon dropped into the background, and perhaps disappeared from the scene altogether, by the last day of the year.

Even if he had ceased to be employed by M.I.5, why was he not called as a witness? Was it because no Government ever admits to the possession of undercover agents who were not official members of M.I.5? Was it because it was dangerous for him ever to be identified? Or was there some other reason for his complete disappearance?

Few people, if any, know the truth. But seldom in the record of modern English justice has a verdict of Guilty been brought in without the presence of so vital a witness for the defence. Although scarcely anyone doubted the accuracy of the verdict, and although there was conclusive evidence of guilt, many people were uneasy about the way in which the verdict was obtained. Secret, unknown witnesses who do not appear to give evidence, strike at the very foundations of English Justice.

And that brings me to the second of the curious sequels.

In December 1917, just one year after that fateful knock on the door, and nine months after the woman was sentenced to ten years' penal servitude, she was released from prison because of ill-health. This was done at Lloyd George's personal request. And it was also at his personal request that the two other accused people were released in the year that the woman died.

SABOTAGE AND ESPIONAGE

THE security of Royalty, Prime Ministers, and other prominent public people is perhaps the most difficult of all the Special Branch responsibilities. Some notabilities accept the fact that they must have a shadow, while others resent it, and make the position of Special Branch officers more difficult. Some want their escorts on certain occasions only, and try to do without them at other times, even to the extent of trying to escape from their constant attention. Others accept the escort but insist on doing the very things which the Special Branch officer is there to prevent them from doing.

The protection of public people demands a high degree of tact, discretion, patience, skill, and special knowledge. Mostly, it is a boring and thankless task, but boredom must never be allowed to blunt the sharp edge of alertness. While he is on duty, the Special Branch man must never relax, even if his charge is on holiday or spending a weekend with family or friends.

I know from personal experience, on a less exalted scale, how difficult bodyguard work can be. Just after the Greek civil war, in 1945, I was responsible for the safety of one of His Majesty's Consuls during a liaison visit he was to make to a leader of the Communist force, E.L.A.S. Although an uneasy truce had ended the civil war, and E.L.A.S. had withdrawn to agreed areas, hatred and bitterness still separated Greek from Greek. Murder by bullet, knife, and hanging; kidnapping of men, women, and children; terrorist attacks on isolated villages; these were commonplace, daily events in Greece in the early part of 1945.

The Consul's visit was fraught with danger. The man he was going to see, a former General in the Greek Army who had been awarded a British Distinguished Service Order in the 1914-18 war, was an old friend of the Consul. No trouble was expected

from him personally, but the Communists he now commanded were not only unreliable but also actively hostile, and it was extremely doubtful if their General could control them.

I drove the Consul to the bridge over the river which was the separating boundary line between Right and Left. The Consul told me that he wished to cross the bridge alone, and that I and my small party of protective troops were not merely to remain on this side of the bridge but were not to be seen by E.L.A.S. I protested and pointed out to him the danger of such a move, reminding him also that my orders were to stay with him.

A British Consul's requests were not to be lightly disregarded, even by the British Army. I tried to reason with him again. He appreciated that I had my orders, but he considered they were mistaken, as there was not the slightest risk of his old friend being a party to violence and deception. That, I said, may well be, but his men were a different problem.

"You can control your own men, can't you?" he asked me.

I assured him that I could.

"The General," the Consul replied, "is a soldier too."

And that, so far as he was concerned, was the end of the matter.

Presumably to reassure me, he said that he would take full responsibility for having countermanded my orders. But that, I thought, would be small recompense if he were killed or even attacked. I still persisted that I must take my orders from my own superior officers. The Consul was immovable. He blandly assured me that as he knew nothing of these security arrangements, and as he had never asked for protection, those orders simply did not exist so far as he was concerned.

If, he added ominously, I persisted in my idea of accompanying him, he would not go. And he outlined the serious diplomatic, political, and other consequences which would follow.

Finally, he crossed the bridge, alone. Two hours later he returned. There had been no incidents, and he could not refrain, in the nicest possible way, from emphasizing how right he had been.

Some months later the Greek General was shot by his own men. Some years later the Consul became one of His Majesty's

Ambassadors, and when I read of his promotion, I could not help wondering what might have happened if the General had been shot by his men that afternoon.

* * * *

No one is better qualified to know just what this escort responsibility involves than ex-Inspector Walter Henry Thompson, who was Sir Winston Churchill's personal bodyguard for nearly twenty years. In his book *I Was Churchill's Shadow*, he wrote:

"At best Mr. Churchill is not a co-operative charge when it comes to protecting him from danger. Danger attracts and exhilarates him. One day, early in the war, when the British Headquarters was at Amiens, close to the front lines, an air-raid warning went off. From the yard of the chateau which served as headquarters could be seen a proper mix-up in the sky between German and Allied planes. It fascinated Winston.

"He crawled under a hedge to hide from the orderlies whose duty it was to shoo us all inside, I shook him by the shoulder and yanked him to his feet. 'Keep your head down, you fool!' he shouted at me, pushing me off. 'Do you want us to miss everything?' And he plunged back into the bushes, parted their branches and went on watching the show.

"At the beginning of the Battle of Britain, on hearing the Alert, the Prime Minister would dutifully descend to the air-raid shelter. But later on his contempt for the bombing grew until it became dangerous even to suggest that he go down at all. Then he was most difficult indeed. It was my duty to keep death away from this man, and when death was near, I had to forget that he was famous and dignified. When it had to be done, I never hesitated to push him behind some protecting wall or angle. He could curse like the Middle Ages. And he would glare at me long afterwards.

"At the height of the blitz Churchill would rush to the roof, on hearing the sirens, to watch the bombing and the gunfire. No persuasion of any kind would stop him from this foolhardy course; but whenever he was in the least polite to me on such occasions, I knew he was feeling guilty. It might be thus:

"'I'm sorry to take you into danger, Thompson. I would not do

it, only I know how much you like it.' Thinking 'Like hell I do,' I would answer with insincere politeness: 'I am not so sure about that, sir. I am mostly concerned with your safety.' Then sensing how provoked I was and how bad he was, he would give me his weak defence: 'When my time is due, Thompson, it will come.'"

But impetuous and careless of danger though he was, Sir Winston Churchill never slipped his shadow as did Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson on a tragic day in June, 1922.

One of the outstanding soldiers of the 1914-18 war, a former Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and, at the time of his death, a Member of Parliament for North Down, Sir Henry was deeply involved in the Irish troubles which were part of the demand for Home Rule. During the war the terrorists had been inactive in Britain, but unrest in Ireland had reached its climax with the Easter Rebellion of 1916.

By 1922 the British Government was moving towards the idea of Home Rule for Southern Ireland, but among the sternest critics of its policy was Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson. To certain Home Rule Irish interests he became a marked man, and he was given Special Branch protection.

On the afternoon of June 22nd, 1922, the Field-Marshal unveiled a memorial at Liverpool Street Station, in London, to railwaymen who had been killed in the war. For private reasons he evaded his Special Branch detectives and returned alone to his house in Eaton Place.

Two Irish gunmen were waiting for him, and as he went up the steps of the house, they fired. Sir Henry Wilson drew his sword in a final, useless, pathetic gesture of self-defence before he fell dead on the steps.

The assassination would never have been attempted had the Special Branch detectives been there.

* * * *

After the Irish Treaty of 1921, when Home Rule was given to Southern Ireland with Ulster remaining outside the new arrangement, Britain was free of "the troubles", the terrorists, and the saboteurs for a number of years. But towards the end of the

nineteen-thirties, the Irish came to town again. Then their violent sabotage was an attempt to force the Government to abolish the partition between the South and Ulster and give Home Rule to all Ireland. This time the terrorist attacks were in the form of sabotage on places and things rather than attempts to kill by violence. But there was death by violence, as there was bound to be, when time bombs in suitcases and trunks were deposited in left-luggage departments at railway stations, and when smaller time bombs were dropped through pillar boxes or left under the bonnets of cars.

The I.R.A. movement of the late nineteen-thirties was directly assisted by Nazi Germany. Here was a situation in which there were grievance, unrest, and discontent to provide the soil in which the Nazi seed flourished. Thus encouraged, the I.R.A. were recklessly bold with their sabotage attempts. One holidaymaker was killed and fourteen people were injured in an explosion in the left-luggage department at King's Cross Station, and in a similar explosion at Victoria Station, five members of the railway staff were injured.

The climax was reached with an explosion at Coventry on August 23rd, 1939. A bomb went off in a crowded street, and five people were killed, and sixty injured. This led to the arrest of five Irishmen who were charged with murder. Two were found guilty and hanged; three were acquitted.

* * * *

While the Irish saboteurs were being tracked and controlled, the Special Branch found itself once again involved with German espionage plans. This time, however, the spies, agents, and potential saboteurs were not so easily found as were those of the years before 1914. By the late nineteen-thirties Britain was a receiving centre for an army of refugees from Nazi-controlled Germany, Austria, and later, Czechoslovakia. So desperate was the plight of the majority of these fugitives from oppression and cruelty that strict security checks were impossible; it was inevitable that a number of spies, agents, and potential saboteurs should slip through a net that could not be too tightly drawn.

And then, of course, there were the Germans who were either already living in Britain or who were frequent visitors. They were comparatively easy to track, and long before there was any threat of war the Special Branch and M.I.5 had a long list of German men and women who were either suspects or were known to be actually engaged in spying. There were other Germans who were making contacts with certain refugees, with the object of forming small spy cells in Britain once the war had begun.

Never before had there been such a network of espionage in Britain, and while the Special Branch detectives were taking care of the Irish troubles, they found too, that this network extended also to Southern Ireland. There, and especially in Dublin, the Germans had a well-organized espionage base.

There was little that could be done about it since the Free State was clearly going to be neutral in the event of war. The border with Ulster gave a convenient observation point. The Atlantic, which would be the hunting area for the U-boat packs, washed the Free State coastline. And Dublin, like those other neutral capitals Stockholm, Ankara, Madrid, Lisbon, was all set as a vital spy-base, a gaping hole through which many war-time secrets could pass.

But the long, patient work of the Special Branch and M.I.5 did a great deal to make that gaping hole smaller. German plans for a secret liaison between agents in Britain and Dublin were frustrated, if not broken.

Just before the outbreak of war, the Special Branch and M.I.5 established an even closer relationship, so that there were many occasions when it was difficult to say where the work of the one began and the other finished. Much of the inquiry work required regular police procedure, and even when war broke out, and drastic measures were called for to deal with the espionage and sabotage menace, it was the Special Branch which made the arrests and were responsible for the prosecutions. Special Branch detectives also served with M.I.5.

The work of the two organizations became more complicated, difficult, and delicate. The loss of so many countries to the Germans brought increasing numbers of foreigners, who had

escaped from the occupied territories. Whereas the loyalty of the great majority of them was beyond doubt, it was inevitable that the spy and saboteur risk was considerably increased.

A particularly difficult, in fact a unique situation, was created by the fall of France in 1940. For the first time in their history the Special Branch and M.I.5 had to deal with the bitter rivalry within a nation that was so tragically divided against itself. These were the Vichy supporters in France, and the Free French who were organizing to continue the fight against the Nazis from outside their own country, and particularly, Britain. But there were other Frenchmen in Britain who, although they had escaped from their country, were neither on one side nor the other. They believed in France as one nation and when they saw that the Navy and certain parts of the Army were to serve with the Allies, and that Frenchmen might have to fight Frenchmen, they resented it. And there were those who became involved in espionage to save, as they sincerely thought, their country.

Well-intentioned though these efforts were, they were a threat to the Allied plans. But even more dangerous were the activities of the fake Free Frenchmen who were secret supporters of Laval and the Vichy *régime*. Most of these men and women were undoubtedly collaborators who were helping the German cause. There were a few, however, who were Vichy supporters because they genuinely believed that France could survive only if a central movement or government was maintained *in France*. Old, pre-war political jealousies and intrigues, of course, had a good deal to do with this, and there were a number of Frenchmen who would not follow the Free French leader, General de Gaulle. Some of them might have supported another leader but not the General.

A difficult and embarrassingly delicate situation arose in London where Government and diplomatic circles soon realized that suspicion and intrigue were to be an inseparable part of the Free French movement. Accusations were made by Frenchmen about Frenchmen, and M.I.5 and the Special Branch became involved in several strange espionage investigations. Some had a negative result, the accusations being the result of political

intrigue, while others were well founded and served to confirm the existence of an extensive French spy ring.

One day in 1943, some very senior members of General de Gaulle's staff gave startling and sensational information to M.I.5. Briefly, it was to the effect that the Admiral-in-Chief of the Free French Navy was the leader of a small but powerful group of officers who were sending top-secret information to the Vichy government. The alleged conspirators were, of course, based on London and in the closest possible touch with every detail of policy matters between the British Cabinet and General de Gaulle's organization. The alleged betrayal of State secrets concerned matters of the highest importance, including operational plans for the liberation of Dakar, in West Africa, and a plot to send a fully-manned French submarine to serve with the Vichy naval forces.

If true, these allegations would not only ruin a vital strategic plan, but they would also undermine and eventually destroy the unity and loyalty of the de Gaulle organization. There was a formidable array of documentary evidence to convince anyone who doubted the truth of these allegations. This evidence consisted mainly of photographed copies of secret letters and reports which the French Admiral was alleged to have sent to Vichy through a neutral source. And the final proof was the reproduction of the Admiral's signature on each document. There were also documents from Vichy.

The man who made these accusations was a high official of the Free French Intelligence Service in London. On charges any less grave than these, his word would probably have been accepted without question, more especially since he supported his allegations with such convincing documentary evidence. M.I.5, however, cross-examined him on every detail. How had he been able to have these fateful and perhaps fatal letters photographed? How had the original letters ever reached the neutral Embassy? And how had they come to be included in the privileged diplomatic bags which were flown to and from France by the neutral power, and which could not be controlled by the Allies?

The Intelligence official not only had the complete answers to these questions, but those answers pointed to the existence of an

extensive espionage system in the very heart of the de Gaullist organization. An official in the Embassy, who was responsible for the contents of the diplomatic bag, had been persuaded to include the original letters and reports. Through the same source a Free French agent had been able to photograph the documents.

This was the gist of the corroborative evidence, but there was a good deal more of a less important nature. It involved scores of trusted people at every level in the Free French *entourage*. There were confirmatory reports from Free French agents who had followed and mixed with the alleged collaborators.

Immediate inquiries were made by M.I.5's own agents and the Special Branch. It was a difficult assignment which had to be carried out in the utmost secrecy. According to the Intelligence official only a small, exclusive number of Free French agents had been used in the original investigations, and only an even smaller and more exclusive number of General de Gaulle's organization were aware of the plot. M.I.5 and the Special Branch were thus severely restricted, their contacts were confined to those people, and their freedom of movement was within the limits of a very narrow circle.

Despite this, they tried to make their investigations as independent as possible, and the result was that the allegations and suspicions seemed to be established beyond doubt. Seven people, including the Admiral-in-Chief of the Free French Forces, were named as the conspirators. The Prime Minister and the War Cabinet were consulted. It was one of the greatest dilemmas which they had faced during the entire war. The arrest of the seven Free French men and women would have grave consequences. No matter how much the affair was kept secret, the Free French movement in London, and the undercover people in occupied France and elsewhere, were certain to know. The Free French Navy were devoted to the Admiral. But once the Prime Minister and the Cabinet were satisfied with the evidence, there could be no alternative but to have the persons concerned arrested. Either way, Free French allegiance and loyalty—at best a matter of divided loyalties and extremely tenuous—were to be seriously weakened.

The decision was taken, and the seven suspected French men

and women were arrested and charged by the Special Branch. All emphatically and indignantly denied the charges. Statements taken from each of the accused were straightforward; the only difference between those separate statements was in the emphasis of their complete denial of the charges.

This was the first time that professional policemen had taken any direct part in the proceedings, and I happen to know that the Special Branch had been uneasy about the arrests from the outset. It was not that anyone doubted the accuracy of the information which had led to the arrests, but the Yard officers did not like the idea of arresting anyone, let alone people of such importance, on what was at best second-hand information. Although the detectives had to some extent carried out independent inquiries, they had been unable to have any direct contact with the accused.

Now that they did have this contact their uneasiness increased. Experienced police officers can generally sum-up suspected people when they are charged, but in this particular case all the accused behaved like innocent people.

A major crisis followed. Despite the overwhelming documentary evidence, was there a chance that an error had been made? If so, it could only be the result of a diabolical plot by Vichy supporters who had been skilful enough to deceive M.I.5, the most responsible quarters in the country, and General de Gaulle himself, who had, of course, been consulted throughout. This was a fantastic possibility, but in view of the Special Branch's uneasiness, one that had to be considered. It led to a further and even more delicate situation.

In normal circumstances, anyone arrested in Britain must be brought before a magistrate and charged within twenty-four hours of arrest. This is one of the most jealously-guarded privileges of freedom, and is a direct consequence of the Habeas Corpus Act and the Bill of Rights. There are certain exceptions to the rule, more particularly under wartime emergency regulations. These exceptions were applied to the seven suspected French people, and for three days they were detained at Scotland Yard, and then they were removed to prisons.

In the meantime, the documentary evidence was re-examined;

the accused were questioned again. And so were those de Gaullists who had first given details of the plot to M.I.5. Detectives worked without a pause. All the people involved were kept equally busy, including those who had been in contact with the neutral Embassy, and diplomatic permission was obtained to make inquiries there.

These inquiries turned uneasiness into suspicion, and suspicion began to give way to certainty. Only highly-trained, experienced professional policemen could have sifted the conflicting evidence and statements, and reduced them to a logical pattern. The detectives worked under great strain and pressure, but urgency and crisis drove them on. Even with the emergency regulations of wartime, there must be a limit to any restriction on the liberty of the subject, and nearly a week had now passed since the arrests had been made.

Rumours of the Admiral's arrest reached the Free French Navy, and the Admiral himself was taken from prison and kept under open arrest at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich.

The most important result of this intensive inquiry was absolute proof that there had been no contact with the neutral Embassy. This startling discovery was an interlocking link in the chain of suspicion, and it revealed the deep-rooted nature of the plot. The inquiries made by the Special Branch before the arrests had been made had taken detectives to the very doors of the Embassy. To have gone beyond the doors would not only have meant obtaining special diplomatic permission—because an Embassy is neutral territory—but would have threatened the essential secrecy of the operation. The shadowing Special Branch officers, for instance, had been able to observe the frequent associations between two of the suspected Frenchwomen and members of the Embassy staff.

The Special Branch now made another arrest, a woman who had been a member of the circle which had given the information. She, like her colleagues, had been under considerable strain, and broke down as soon as the detectives questioned her. She confessed, and disclosed the existence of the entire plot.

The incriminating documents had begun as faked letters and reports which had been typed and photographed in General de Gaulle's headquarters; and the people responsible were those who

had gone to M.I.5. A practised forger had reproduced the Admiral's signature, and had also been responsible for the letters and documents which were said to have come from Vichy.

This time the Special Branch had everything under its own control, and there was no danger of its being caught again without irrefutable evidence. Every detail was cross-checked and corroborated. The machine on which the letters and documents had been typed was scientifically tested at the Metropolitan Police Laboratory. The result showed beyond any argument that this was the same machine.

Typewriters, like fingerprints and bullets, have individual characteristics. Just as two bullets fired from the same revolver or rifle will have different markings—and can never have the same—so does each typewriter have unrepeatable and unique indentations.

As a result of the Special Branch's investigation, the Admiral and his fellow-suspects were released, and the Free French Intelligence official was arrested. He was eventually tried at the Central Criminal Court, found guilty, and sentenced. No public evidence of that trial exists. Again, emergency wartime regulations allowed secret trials to be held when the Security of the State was involved.

The plot had been prepared with great skill, and many innocent events had been cleverly twisted to give them an appearance of guilt. The association of the two women with the Embassy officials was one example of this, and in the circumstances which the Special Branch was able to observe the comings and goings, the meetings certainly gave grounds for suspicion.

HANDCUFFS ACROSS THE SEA

JUST as Scotland Yard acts as a clearing-house for a large part of Britain's crime, so does the International Criminal Police Commission, better known as Interpol, serve as a clearing-house for crime over a large area of the world. And just as the Yard helps, advises, and co-operates, when asked, but has no authority over forces outside its own territory, so does Interpol help and co-operate with its member States but has no authority over them. The Yard, as we have seen, does send its men and its resources to other British police forces, when requested; but Interpol can send neither as it has no men and its only resources are its organization and its dossiers.

Interpol is a truly international body composed of fifty-one member States. They are Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Burma, Canada, Ceylon, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Eire, Finland, France, Germany (Western), Great Britain, Greece, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Libya, Luxembourg, Mexico, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Norway, Pakistan, Philippines, Portugal, Saar, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Tangier, Thailand, Turkey, United States of America, Venezuela, Yugoslavia.

As I have said, Interpol has no force of its own, but it is the channel through which inquiries flow from any of the member States, and which are dealt with as quickly as possible. These inquiries go through Interpol's headquarters, the International Bureau, in Paris. Although the organization has offices in the country of every member State, the International Bureau in Paris is the only one which is staffed and maintained by Interpol officials. All the other branches are staffed and maintained by the governments and police of each member State, and are known



Photo. Scotland Yard

9 & 10 Searching for clues.

Photo. Scotland Yard





Photo. Keystone

11 Conference at Epsom. A veterinary surgeon seen with Chief Inspector Morris (extreme right) as they inspect

as the National Central Bureau. The International Bureau deals only with this central authority in each member State. In Great Britain, for example, Scotland Yard is the National Central Bureau, and Sir Ronald Howe, Deputy Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, is Britain's Interpol representative. His staff works at the Yard and the organization is maintained by the Home Office.

We can take a hypothetical example to illustrate how Interpol works. Let us assume that the Liverpool Police report that a well-known drug trafficker is wanted for alleged peddling of drugs in the Lancashire seaport. He has slipped through the cordon which the Liverpool police have thrown round his movements, and is believed to be making for the south-east coast, and probably for one of the Channel ports. Scotland Yard and the Kent County Constabulary are warned, but somehow the man escapes and disappears.

This is the stage at which Britain's National Central Bureau goes into action. A description of the wanted person, accompanied by all details, is flashed to the International Bureau in Paris. These details include fingerprints, or anything that CRO has about him. Interpol checks with its own dossiers and, when all the information is collated (and the whole essence of Interpol's operation is speed) it is sent in turn to the other National Bureaux. This is no guarantee that the drug trafficker will be caught, but it is a highly effective way of trying to close all his avenues of escape.

Warning information is also exchanged between the National Bureaux, and via the International Bureau, about crooks who, although they are not wanted at that particular moment, are known to be on the move. It could be that they are taking a holiday, but since few crooks take holidays without pay or making the holidays pay for themselves, the International Police forces are glad to be warned about possible visitors.

Another example of how Interpol reaches across Continents, and indeed the world, to grasp the absconding crook, is provided by the case of a man who was arrested in Brazil. His passport photograph was without doubt a true likeness, but the police in Brazil had no other information. Details of his appearance, copies

of his fingerprints, and particulars of the crime for which he had been arrested, were sent to Interpol's International Bureau, which circulated details. In the fingerprint archives of one of the member States the fingerprints were proved to be those of a man with quite a different name. The assumed name masked the identity of a well-known crook whose record was on the files of the International Bureau and on those of more than one National Bureau. He had skilfully taken off the photograph from the original passport which he had stolen and substituted one of his own.

It is not always necessary for the International Bureau to circulate all National Bureaux when an inquiry is received. The Paris headquarters might have enough information in their own dossiers, or it might be that the wanted person is known to haunt only particular places and localities.

The Interpol of to-day has grown out of a series of International Police and Legal conferences, the first of which was held at Monaco in 1914. The object of this conference was to enable policemen and lawyers to study mutual crime problems, and to consider methods whereby there could be some liaison between various countries for the speedy tracing and arrest of international crooks. This was not the birth of Interpol itself; but it was the birth of the idea that subsequently led to Interpol, and to a system that was to overcome existing ponderous methods and cut through red tape.

The 1914-18 war prevented any development of the idea, and the next conference was not held until 1923. It was then that the International Police Commission was formed, with its first headquarters in Vienna. The original membership consisted of thirty-one States, and included most of the European countries except Soviet Russia. At first the system worked well, although the various extradition regulations and other rules peculiar to each country made progress slower than it would normally have been.

But the rise to power of Hitler's Germany threatened the freedom and integrity of Interpol, and once Germany had marched into Austria that was virtually the end of the organization. It did not close down, but its value was lost when Hitler had the head-

quarters transferred from Vienna to Berlin. It was then used for political purposes and that, as I shall show, was never intended by the founders.

The inevitable crisis which would have been caused as a result of this was staved off by the 1939–45 war. A year after it had ended, Interpol was reformed and reorganized. There was then a much more urgent need for such a body, as the volcano of war had turned large areas of Europe into a crooks' paradise. Black market offences, drug trafficking, fraud, white slavery, and smuggling all flourished. A new race of criminals developed, and the roaming bands of homeless, displaced persons included many crooks among their ranks.

The first post-war attempt to reform Interpol was made in 1946, when the International Police Conference met at Brussels. It is interesting to look back on the nations which attended that first post-war meeting of the Conference. They were Belgium, Chile, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Egypt, France, Great Britain, Holland, Persia, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Yugoslavia. A comparison with the list given on page 116 shows that the membership has undergone some changes, the most significant of which are the resignations of Communist Czechoslovakia and Poland. Soviet Russia never was a member.

The Brussels Conference decided that the new headquarters to replace pre-war Vienna should be Paris, and that the International languages should be English and French. Nearly all the old Interpol's records and documents had disappeared in Berlin. That was an irreparable loss, but as all the membership countries had their own pre-war records, the newly-formed Interpol did not have to begin again from scratch.

Interpol's task was a formidable one, faced as it was with a cauldron of crime and a moving cavalcade of criminals almost on its doorstep. But more serious than that, was the fact that certain countries were anxious to follow Hitler's idea and use Interpol for political purposes.

As I have said earlier, it never was the intention to allow politics to be any part of Interpol's activities. Soon after the war this was

confirmed beyond any possible doubt in a sentence which formed part of Article I in the code of statutes. The article itself said:

“The purpose of the International Criminal Police Commission is to ensure and officially promote the growth of the greatest possible mutual assistance between all criminal police authorities within the limits of the laws existing in the different States, to establish and develop all institutions likely to contribute to an efficient repression of Common Law crimes and offences to the *strict exclusion of all matters having a political, religious or racial character.*”

I have put those last twelve words in italics because they make it perfectly clear that Interpol was not to be used for political purposes.

Nevertheless, that did not deter some nations from attempting to do so. As soon as they realized that the International Bureau in Paris would not handle any requests for information, or for the passing on of information if the wanted person was required for a political crime, then other methods were tried. False charges were made out against political refugees and people who were wanted for war crimes and other offences. This, however, was largely overcome by Interpol's insistence on precise details of the charges and precise information about the people concerned.

This practice became less prevalent when Czechoslovakia and Poland left Interpol, but it did not stop altogether. There are member States to-day which still try to reach out and, through Interpol, grasp their political fugitives and those who are seeking asylum elsewhere.

When Burgess and MacLean disappeared from Britain and vanished into what was then some unknown void, several of the popular newspapers and their more imaginative writers credited Interpol with playing a considerable part in the search for the missing men. It is quite certain that Interpol did nothing of the kind. In the first place, neither of these men was charged with any crime. It is a cardinal rule that any man or woman wanted through Interpol must have committed a crime against common law and that there must be a warrant issued for the arrest. Since the men were not charged, there could be no question of a warrant.

Neither does Interpol undertake to search for missing persons except in very exceptional circumstances or when, perhaps, the finding of someone reported missing is essential to the solving of a crime. But no matter how tragic, how heartrending the circumstances may be, the organization will not search for girls missing from their homes or for women suspected of having been trapped into prostitution. If, of course, the finding of the woman was likely to lead to the arrest of the pimp who had trapped her, then Interpol would do its best, through its National Bureaux, to discover her. The facts must be clearly stated and the evidence conclusive before Interpol will act. But the Interpol system is sufficiently flexible, and sufficiently human, to set its organization into action to search for people for whom there is an SOS when serious family illness or death is involved.

Interpol's intercommunication is mainly carried out by documents known as Circulations. In urgent cases radio and the telephone are used, but normally the information is sent by air-mailed Circulations.

There are three kinds of Circulations. The first goes in a red-cornered envelope and, as its colour suggests, demands immediate action. This type of circulation is used for persons who are wanted and who should therefore be arrested as soon as they are found and then extradited. The second most urgent document, the blue-cornered Circulation, is a straightforward request for information about a wanted person, and might be described as a sort of travelling Criminal Record Office. There may eventually be a sequel to it as urgent as anything contained in a red-cornered circulation, but until the necessary information is forthcoming, no action can be taken. The difference between the two documents is that the red-cornered one is the result of all information having been gathered; and the blue-cornered one gathers the information and may lead in due course to the sending of a red-cornered Circulation.

The third type is green-cornered. This is a warning order that a criminal is on the move. With it goes any supplementary information which might assist a National Bureau, or several Bureaux if the criminal is bound for more than one destination, to keep him

under observation. Although the green-cornered envelope is the least urgent, it is by no means the least important. Many a swindle, or jewel theft, has been forestalled because the police have been forewarned by the arrival of the green-cornered envelope containing an information.

International crooks tend to follow much the same habits as do those who stay within their own frontiers. Although they are mostly specialists and creatures of habit, there is a greater tendency to variety, due to the wider scope available to an international crook. In the years that followed the end of the 1939-45 war, the term black market, for example, covered a variety of crimes and offences. Smugglers, and especially their agents and carriers, do not always confine themselves to watches from Switzerland or diamonds from Amsterdam; but the forger, the white-slaver and his pimp, the counterfeiter and the confidence-trickster, generally keep to their own trades.

TRACKING THE DRUG TRAFFICKERS

AS A RULE, a detective's attitude to crime and criminals is unemotional. He has a job to do and quite often has no particular feelings against the criminal himself. Even some types of murder are regarded with tolerance, and there is rarely any personal feeling of hate or bitterness.

But there are certain crimes—and vicious murder, rape, sexual interference with children, some forms of blackmail, and drug-trafficking are among them—which rouse even the most unemotional police officer. Bad though all these crimes are, none of them is worse than drug trafficking.

Drug peddling or trafficking may certainly be described as a crime without bounds. Even when the tragically-wretched victims are found and perhaps arrested for being in possession of drugs, this does not even touch the boundaries of the evil.

Behind the victim is the pedlar. He is the immediate supplier, perhaps only a small-time agent. Many such agents are not wholly employed in the drug business but often work in some other, honest trade. Seamen, coloured workers, and various types of foreigners are usually the guilty men so far as Britain is concerned. Comparatively few British subjects take part in this dreadful traffic.

Behind the small-time pedlars are the vast, world-wide organizations which produce and supply the drugs or the materials and crops from which the drugs are made. The only way, then, to attack the drug menace is to reach the big gangs which are organized on efficient business lines. But the link with Big Business is often found in a victim's house or in the fo'c'sle of a ship where the carrier hides his goods.

This great international trade, more evil than white slavery or blackmail, requires special and particular knowledge. Most

detectives who track the traffickers are specialists. Abroad, especially in the "dope countries", these detectives seldom do any other form of investigation. Serious though the traffic is in Britain, there is no necessity for the Yard or for the provincial police to detail detectives solely for the drug investigations. But when the occasion does arise, there are men such as Detective Superintendent Colin MacDougall, with an unrivalled knowledge of the drug pedlars.

Because it is different from any other type of crime, drug peddling has a background which every detective connected with the evil must know something about. In the first place, it is a world-wide problem, and there are very few countries which are entirely free of it. The United States of America is believed to have the greatest number of drug addicts, and therefore the greatest number of dope pedlars. But the evil in the States is not so much from within as from without, for the pedlars of the world's most evil trade find a ready market among the thousands of American addicts. So vital a problem has this become that the Treasury Department has a special Bureau of Narcotics at Washington. Its duties are not only to prevent people from becoming addicts or the breaking up of gangs, but also to prevent the illegal imports into the country.

The world-wide strength of the evil provides every opportunity for first-class organization. This does not mean, of course, that one vast organization controls the dope trade. But there are long lines of communications between the producing and the receiving countries.

The second important point that the detective must remember is the fact that conditions are made favourable because the illegal goods are not merely wanted, but despairingly demanded. The pedlar is not only wanted but is also sought out. Thus the drug racket is unique, in that, unlike murder, blackmail, theft, and other crimes, victim and criminal are in partnership to avoid the police. At the very beginning of any investigation the detective is therefore up against a barrier of opposition. There is no pre-arranged plan, as there may be with robbery. There are no squeakers or narks after the crime has been committed. There are

no clues for the forensic laboratories to work on. There is nothing except the dreadful conspiracy of silence to keep alive the world's most shameful trade. Sometimes the detective who is really experienced in the dope racket can tell by a person's face, movements, and appearance that he or she is an addict.

But it is one thing to spot an addict, and quite another to find the source from which the "stuff" is obtained. The more expert the addict, the more artfully secretive he or she becomes. And the pedlars are no less secretive. They do not conform to any type, and although it is true that many of them are Lascars, seamen, Orientals, immigrants from the West Indies and Africa, the trade is by no means confined to them. In any event, they may be merely the people who bring the drugs into the country and then sell them to other agents but not direct to the addicts. They may be people in many grades of society.

The pedlars are the people who do the real damage. The ready market for their goods offers many possibilities, and they are always alert to develop their flourishing trade. First, there are the permanent addicts, people who are so drug-sodden as to be incurable. They are the regular customers who will pay any price, financial or moral, to obtain what they want. They are so far gone that any police intervention is unlikely to have any effect. But by discovering who they are, it makes it easier, in turn, to discover the pedlars and then, perhaps, the supply ring.

Many addicts introduce their desperate habit to other people, partly because they like the company of fellow drug-takers, and partly because they are sometimes blackmailed into doing so by the agents and pedlars. And the method of blackmail is tragically simple—it is the loss of "the stuff". All that the agent has to do is to threaten to withhold it.

But the most evil and insidious market of all is that which includes young men and women. In America, especially, it begins as a "dare", as a search for yet another experience when all other experiences are jaded. Throughout the world the pedlars tempt and eventually seduce young men and women. One of their most evil methods is to challenge the potential victim's will-power. Many people cannot resist a challenge which they regard as a trial

of strength. "You could never make me a drug fiend," are the opening words that lead the way along the road to doom and despair. The challenge is accepted. The experiment may or may not be an enjoyable one. But it is thrilling, heady stuff. A second attempt is made. The habit is formed.

Although invaluable work is done locally by detecting gangs and pedlars in a particular country, or by seizing the drugs as they enter by seaport or airport, the real attack must take place perhaps thousands of miles away where the export begins, where the Big Business gangs are at work with their wholesale trade, where the raw materials are produced. But this is a formidable task. In Britain, and in a large number of other countries, drug-taking is looked on with horror. Elsewhere, however, it is accepted with a shrug of indifference. If people wish to drug themselves into moral rot, that is their business. And it is the profitable business, too, of the suppliers. Because of this difference in outlook, there is a lack of co-operation and, therefore, a loss of momentum in the world-wide attack on the trade. This is true even of some of Interpol's member States. Many investigations, inquiries, and requests for information come to a frustratingly dead end in those countries where the drug racket is profitable, not only to individual traders, but also to the State, be it even indirectly.

But the spreading menace of the drug traffic is maintained not only because of a receptive export market. It is also widened by the constant movement of people from the "dope countries". Once the addicts are on the move their dope must be on the move too. Wherever they settle there must be a source of supply.

From a detective and police point of view the world-wide ramifications of the trade present the greatest difficulty. If drug-taking and the drug traffic are ever stamped out—and that is a dream which is more fantastic than that of any opium smoker—it would have to be dealt with on a very different level, as indeed it is being dealt with by the United Nations, the United States Bureau of Narcotics, and other organizations. The detective can be concerned only with what is happening in his own country, although, of course, news from Interpol may give fair warning of movements and developments.

But Interpol's information about drugs is probably its least successful function. And that is not Interpol's fault. The ramifications of the drug trade are such that, like many another profitable business, there are manufacturers or producers who work through a host of agents and sub-agents. Normally, the national police forces can be interested only in the people who bring the drugs into the country and those who distribute it. For this reason it is difficult to trace the importations. Although bulk supplies of heroin, opium, cocaine, codeine, morphine, or Indian hemp may be smuggled to certain distributing centres, the importation to places such as Britain, for example, is broken down to small-quantity drugs and supplies which can be carried by individuals. Their methods are difficult to trace.

The police know of every trick there is for hiding the dope, but it is the very fact that there *are* so many ways that makes detection difficult. It is impossible to search every seaman's body-belt; to look at every book to see if there are false pages beneath which there may be reefers—cigarettes filled with marijuana; to test every chocolate or cake or piece of bread; to examine every square inch of every cargo; to look for false bottoms and panels in boxes, chests, kitbags; to examine every bunch of flowers in every cabin; to analyse tins of cocoa, coffee, and packets of tea.

Britain's investigators are as alertly-vigilant as any in the world. They know the tricks of the trade as well as anyone in the world. They exercise a rigid control at airports and seaports. But they are handicapped by the British insistence on freedom of the individual. In theory, there is nothing to prevent customs officers, customs investigators, and the C.I.D. from examining as many people as possible in the search for drugs. The horrifying consequences for the addicts cannot be exaggerated and would justify the most rigorous search and the maintenance of a special force of men and women who do nothing else. Hundreds of people every day could be stopped. These special investigators could swarm like honey bees to make searches that are not only very much more thorough but also much more frequent.

But no customs officer or investigator, no policeman, no politician, rigidly applies the letter of every law in Britain, or

applies every power which the law confers, the law is there to be used in emergencies, perhaps, but once it is used indiscriminately there is a very proper outcry about interference with the freedom of the individual. Too much casual searching without there being sufficient reason for it, and strictly legal though it may be, would bring complaints of unnecessary interference with the liberty of the subject.

Nevertheless, there are experienced police officers who believe that the day may come, even in Britain, when there will have to be an officially-recognized Narcotics Squad just as there is an officially-recognized Fraud Squad and a Flying Squad. The drug racket in Britain is not serious by the standards of other countries, but it is one that could quickly become a real social menace.

The increase in the numbers of coloured people entering Britain has also increased the risk of drug-taking. This is not a criticism of the coloured people, but it is another example of a totally different outlook, and of a totally different standard of moral values. It is only a comparatively few of these immigrants who are active pedlars or addicts, but their influence can be out of all proportion to their numbers.

Tracking the drug traffickers in Britain is very largely a matter of working on "information received", of undercover contacts made by the Flying Squad and the Ghost Squad, and, to a lesser degree, of observation. The problem is easier when investigations have to be made into traffic which is confined to Britain's aliens who are drug takers and drug traffickers. They have their own haunts, their own contacts, and seldom operate away from them. In those circumstances detectives know within fairly broad limits where to look, the people to know, and the methods used.

But when the traffic is not confined to the aliens, the problem is much more difficult. Nevertheless, since the source of the supplies is frequently, but by no means always, traced to foreigners, many investigations begin in Dockland and the foreign quarters of London and other cities. Constant supervision and searching at seaports and other centres is responsible for most of the control of the traffic in Britain. Despite this, however, there is considerable infiltration through the close-meshed net of vigilance.

In addition to the routine method of carriers smuggling dope from ships and aircraft, many other ways have been found to filter the dope through to the ever-ready customer.

An observant citizen piloting his cabin cruiser some distance offshore near one of the Channel ports noticed a man fishing from an anchored rowing boat. On several occasions just after the incoming cross-channel packet had passed, he would reel in his line, pull up the anchor, row his boat in the gradually-fading wake of the steamer, pick up an object from the water and take it overside. At first there was nothing particularly unusual about this, but when the act was repeated the viewer's curiosity was aroused as the man was clearly picking up something which was being thrown from a porthole in the ship.

Then curiosity sharpened to suspicion, and the owner of the cabin-cruiser mentioned the matter to the local Chief Constable. The information was duly passed to one of the Special Branch detectives on port duty, and a check was made on the fisherman. He proved to be a foreigner who had come to live in the town a month previously. So far as anyone knew, he never left the place, but his wife went up to London fairly regularly.

The Special Branch detective crossed the Channel, boarded a steamer that was leaving for England. As the vessel approached the port he watched discreetly. But the fisherman was not there. Three times the detective had to cross and re-cross the Channel before he saw the fisherman again. And then he saw a water-proofed-top bottle thrown from a porthole aft.

As the steamer moved inshore, the man reeled in his line, pulled up the anchor, and rowed to the bottle which bobbed up and down in the foaming wake.

Close observation was kept on the man's flat. Two days later his wife went to London, and detectives followed her to an address in Soho. While this place was kept under observation, the man in the boat was detained the moment he stepped ashore from yet another offshore trip. The bottle in his boat contained raw materials for drugs.

A telephone call to London was followed by a raid on the Soho premises, and another dope ring was broken up.

15

THE VICE SQUAD

AN 18-years-old girl escaped from a Borstal institution. Two days later, someone "answering to her description" was reported to be hitch-hiking by lorry to London. During the previous twelve months, two girls who had been released from that same institution had gone to a café in Soho with introductions to the pimps who used it, and both had begun a career of prostitution.

The girl who had escaped had no previous associations with London, and neither had she any relatives there. The Metropolitan Police thought it a reasonable assumption that she, too, would make for the café, and two plain clothes women constables were detailed to keep the place under observation. It had to be a very discreet observation, for no one can spot a "dick" more easily than some of the frequenters of Soho, and even if the two police-women had not been recognized as such, any unknown loiterers are treated with suspicion.

From a room over a shop opposite the café, the policewomen saw the girl arrive. A few minutes later she was on her way to the police station.

It was a small, routine job, squalid, sordid, and without any element of excitement. But it was typical of the day-to-day work carried out by the uniformed and plain clothes men and women of the Metropolitan Force, a number of whom belong to the Vice Squad, the popular name of the specially selected officers who deal with prostitution—and all that goes with it—perversion, obscenity, some forms of blackmail, and the dope racket.

The dark, murky world in which vice flourishes is a powerful and often a desperately dangerous one for those who live in it. The razor, the knife, face-searing vitriol, brutally-maiming beatings, and occasional shootings can maintain a reign of terror in the "square mile of vice" which includes Piccadilly and Soho, in London.

Although the big cities and towns are inevitably the main centres of vice, and especially the organized variety, it flourishes, too, on a smaller scale in country towns and quiet suburban areas. It may be the lone prostitute discreetly running her business from a flat, or it may be the "blue film" racket, such as the one known to me in a Surrey town a few years ago. This consists of the showing of crude sex films in which no detail is spared. They are 16-mm. affairs which are produced as secretly as they are shown.

In London and other cities and towns they are sometimes shown in small private cinemas, but they can be shown just as effectively in private houses. High prices are charged for the hire of the films, but there is no lack of customers. The "blue film" racket has a longer life in the cities and larger towns, but in smaller places news of it spreads beyond a circle of customers that must always grow wider. The organizers, however, keep a sharp ear to the ground and are ready to withdraw their exclusive privilege before the police can obtain enough evidence for a charge.

Detection is difficult, as potential customers are strictly vetted before they join the audience. The police may suspect, they may even be certain of the racket's existence, but until they can produce conclusive proof—which, of course, is only likely to be obtained by a detective being present at a performance—they are powerless to intervene.

But the areas in which vice really flourishes, and where big money is involved, are cities and large towns, where there is usually a fairly well-defined area for prostitution and pervers. In London's West End, in the notorious "square mile of vice", prostitution is a highly-organized business. In that district no girl can sell herself, or have a "beat" of her own. Every yard of every street used by prostitutes in the "square mile" is controlled by one of several pimps, or, as the police phrase has it, men (and sometimes women) who "live on the immoral earnings of a woman".

It is an astonishing but perfectly true fact that in a country with so great a tradition of freedom, Britain has a vice dictatorship which, although on a smaller scale, is as vicious, as dangerous, and as despotic as any in the world. No trade union imposes a closer closed shop than that of the dictators of the streets; no iron curtain country is more difficult to enter than the world of prostitution, at any rate in some big cities, with London no exception.

The pimps, ponces, or bullies who carry on the shameful traffic in women in London are mostly (but by no means always) foreigners, notably Maltese, Cypriots, Greeks. Once a girl enters their employment she and her colleagues working for the same pimp are entirely controlled by him. The method of employment can vary, but whether the man demands a fixed (and very high) percentage of her earnings, an agreed sum per night or week—which the girl must find—or pays her a wage and takes all that she earns, the West End's pimp trade is a highly profitable one. Only his girls work in the area which he controls, and in the unlikely event of a "stranger" plying her trade there she would be forcibly warned-off, not only by the pimp's own thugs but by the regular prostitutes as well.

There are other areas in London where the streets are free for any woman to hawk herself without a pimp's protection, but if other prostitutes operate there they may make life unendurable for the newcomer.

The problem of prostitution is a particularly difficult one for the police in Britain. The Metropolitan Police especially comes in for considerable criticism because the "square mile of vice" is among the best-known vice areas in the world, and has one of the largest public displays of women for hire to be seen anywhere.

Many right-minded people are shocked at this public display of immorality. "Why," they ask, "don't the police do something about it? Why are there more prostitutes to be seen in the West End of London than there are in the streets of some of the more notorious vice cities of the world? Why isn't this evil stamped out?" The detectives, uniformed and plain clothes men and women of C Division which patrols and administers the West End, are accused of tolerance, slackness, connivance, and even worse.

The demand to "stamp out the evil of prostitution" is almost as old as prostitution itself, and it is rightly described as the oldest trade in the world.

But the police take a more realistic view. They realize that no efforts of theirs can entirely stamp it out, so they try to restrict its worst evils and to keep it within controllable bounds.

Whereas it may be true that the amount of prostitution to be seen in the "square mile of vice" compares unfavourably with

some other cities, London, in fact, is far less vice-ridden than most other cities, especially those where brothels—legalized or otherwise—exist. One senior C.I.D. officer, who works with the Vice Squad, takes the realistic view that the more prostitutes there are on the streets the fewer the brothels and secret vice spots. London also has its share of these, but not to the same extent as those in places abroad.

It is the control if not the prevention, of these underground activities which provides a great deal of the Vice Squad's work. If London has comparatively few brothels as such, the "call girl" system is worked with some degree of success. This is another example of controlled vice. The organizers have lists of girls "on call", who are available for a night, a week-end, or longer if required.

It is a risky if highly profitable business, and the vigilance of the men and women of the Squad keep it within reasonable limits. Because the girls do not always operate in a place which could qualify as a brothel—most of them in fact use their own flats or hotels—detection is difficult. So far as it is possible, "clients" are carefully vetted, but the life of a "call girl" organizer is generally a short one.

Another type of "private" prostitution, again a risky one for its practitioners, are the girls who advertise and offer their services as artists' models, photographic models, or masseuses. Their advertisements generally take the form of cards in shop windows. "Artists' Model, young, available for private sessions. Luxurious studio available. Ring —— for appointment." "Ex-Beauty Queen, 22, offers services as photographers' model. Experienced. Ring ——." "Massage or electrical treatment available from experienced masseuse. Telephone —— for appointment."

Some shop-window advertisements of this type are genuine; most, however, are a cover for private prostitution or some form of perversion. The risks of discovery are considerable. The money to be made is high, and, of course, when the "business" fails as a result of prosecution, the girl can always begin again. In a recent prosecution, which followed a detective's answer to a shop-window advertisement, the accused girl was said to be making between £30 and £40 a week.

Prosecution in all cases of prostitution can be a difficult business,

and there is considerable public misunderstanding about it. By itself, the act of prostitution is neither a crime nor an offence. A woman does not break the law merely because she is rewarded for her immorality with cash instead of kind. In his book, *The Criminal Law*, F. T. Giles writes:

“Prostitution is not a crime, but section 28 of the Town Police Clauses Act, 1847, makes it an offence for ‘any common prostitute or night-walker to loiter and importune passengers in a street or public place for the purposes of prostitution’.

“The prosecutor must prove that he knows the woman to be a prostitute and has seen her making indiscriminate advances to men passing in the street. The importuning is proved by evidence that the woman obstructed passers-by or spoke to them in a way that might annoy them.

“The charge is triable summarily. The maximum punishment is imprisonment up to fourteen days or a fine of forty shillings. Where the woman persists in defiance of the law, the magistrates may order her to find sureties or go to prison in default.”

There is no shortage of newcomers to fill an unceasing demand. In Britain, at any rate, almost all prostitutes take to it willingly if not enthusiastically. There are some who are blackmailed into prostitution or otherwise forced into it, but for the most part a girl goes into it of her own free will. Comparatively few, however, deliberately choose it as a career, but the men and women who run the vice rackets are constantly on the alert for the tragically large numbers of girls who can be persuaded or cajoled to go on the streets. Most of them are of poor intelligence, have a weak character, and are lazy. Some come to Britain from places such as Eire to seek work; once adrift in a city they are easy victims for the racketeers. Young women whose marriages have failed, girls who have run away from home, others who have failed to find careers as models, dancers, and actresses—these are types whom the racketeers seek out.

The men and women of the police vice squads do their most valuable work in keeping this dreadful traffic under some sort of control. Because of their vigilance and alertness hundreds of girls are saved from prostitution every year. There may be some justification for the statement that the police are tolerant and too easy-going with the prostitutes themselves, but there is

nothing easy-going about their efforts to bring the racketeers to justice.

Flogging and long-term prison sentences can be given for those who "live on the immoral earnings of women", but proof that someone is in fact receiving money is obviously difficult to obtain. As with all other crime, the offence must be proved "beyond all reasonable doubt".

In nearly all vice offences corroborative evidence is difficult to obtain. In a world where a "squeaker" can be silenced and marked by a razor-slash or disfigured for life by acid, witnesses are scarce.

Unlike the work of other specialist branches such as the Flying Squad, Fraud Squad or Special Branch, that of the Vice Squad is not particularly attractive or as much sought-after. It is squalid, rarely publicized, and less sympathetically received by the public. Some of that work is so trying and, indeed, so distasteful, that detectives and plain clothes men frequently change their duties. This applies particularly to that most repugnant of all Vice Squad tasks—and especially in the West End of London—of keeping watch on and shadowing homosexuals and male perverts.

It is outside the scope of this book to discuss the rights and wrongs of the law on homosexuality and other acts of indecency. The fact is, however, that from the point of view of the detectives who have to administer it, some change is essential. It is one of the few tasks which the police carry out for which there is decreasing public support. For better or worse, there is a growing body of opinion which believes that homosexuality should no longer be considered as a crime, that unless there is public indecency, the perverts should not be subject to prosecution.

Be that as it may, the law has to be administered as it stands, but if the law falls into disrespect, then the officers who have to enforce it are seriously handicapped in their work. One thing is certain, whatever changes may be made there will have to be some safeguarding legislation to prevent the seduction of boys and young men. As things are now, this is one of the vital tasks carried out in the West End of London and, to a lesser degree, elsewhere. The nightly patrols are ever alert for the approach of the experienced pervert to young men who are clearly inexperienced.

FALSE PRETENCES

A VERY large number of the crimes that Britain's Criminal Investigation Departments handle each year can be classified under the general heading of Fraud. It is a classification which covers many activities, ranging from the small, unspectacular cases of crooks who defraud other people with hard luck stories and thereby obtain money by false pretences, to the big, and much publicised company promotion and fraudulent share schemes.

No other crime in the calendar, if indeed, fraud can be described as a single crime type, has a Rogues' Gallery to compare with it. Some cases, of course, are the work of highly qualified professional persons, but the majority are petty frauds which reflect upon the incredible gullibility and credibility of human nature.

As I shall show later, despite the considerable amount of publicity given to them, there are certain types of petty fraud which never fail to deceive people. Most of the minor frauds are dealt with by the Divisional C.I.D.'s, and without the assistance of officers from headquarters, but for the big, spectacular cases, Scotland Yard has a special Fraud Squad. As with other departments at the Yard, it is available to police forces throughout the country, but some of the larger cities and towns have followed the Yard's example and set up a Fraud Squad of their own.

The Metropolitan Fraud Squad was formed in March, 1946, in anticipation of large-scale attempts to obtain money by false pretences which it was thought would follow the end of the war. After the 1914-18 war there had been a similar attempt to form a Squad, but neither then, nor in the years between the wars, was there a team of specialists available to deal with such cases. In fact, this inability to conduct its own expert inquiries into company, stockbroking and suchlike frauds, was one of the major

weaknesses in Britain's detective organization. Although there were accountants and solicitors to analyse balance-sheets, cash books and other documents, and who knew something about Company Law, they had not sufficient knowledge to interpret the results of their work on a criminal basis.

This defect is important when it is remembered that any questions which are put, or any statements which are taken, are subject to precisely the same strict conditions that govern any other police work. The Judges' Rules must be observed in exactly the same way as they are when a murderer, or any other criminal, is being cross-examined or charged. Before the Fraud Squad was formed, there were very few detectives available who knew enough about Company Law, accountancy and allied subjects to enable them to investigate a case at first hand, and then to stand up to expert cross-examination at the subsequent court proceedings. There were one or two notable exceptions when a detective in charge of a case was able to meet the experts very nearly on equal terms, but these were rare occasions.

For the most part, then, the police had to rely on outside expert opinion. I am not suggesting that even under the present system members of the Fraud Squad know as much as professional accountants and solicitors, but they are police officers with a special knowledge and flair for that type of work, and who have studied its many aspects. Indeed, the extent of their knowledge often surprises the experts as well as the crooks. Fraud Squad detectives have learnt to talk the same language, and can interpret, therefore, the experts' work because they understand it.

The formation of the Fraud Squad led to an interesting change in police relationships in London. The Capital has two quite independent forces, the Metropolitan and the City Police, each with its own Commissioner and organization. When the then Metropolitan Commissioner, Sir Harold Scott, decided to have a Fraud Squad, he had in mind the need for a body of persons who would be competent to deal with company, share, and stock-broking work, although, as we shall see later, it became responsible for a variety of other crimes which come within the general description of fraud. But for the main work, a large part of the

investigations would lie within the City of London itself, and this was the responsibility of the City Police. Sir Harold saw at once that as the closest liaison between the two forces was vital, the only effective way to achieve this would be by joint responsibility for the newly-formed Fraud Squad. The Commissioner of Police for the City welcomed the idea, and to-day the Fraud Squad has in its ranks detectives from the two forces. This has overcome the difficulty of either force having to obtain prior permission to operate in the territory of the other, or of the members of one force being deprived of the powers of arrest in the territory of the other. This admirable example of liaison work was further regularized by City Police members of the Fraud Squad being sworn in as Metropolitan Police officers.

Apart from these highly specialized crimes dealt with by the Fraud Squad, there is a whole range of fraud which is mostly handled by a Divisional C.I.D.

Despite the rigorous control exercised by the Jockey Club, the occasional horse-racing fraud is attempted. The most common type is the switching of horses so that an animal running under one name is, in fact, a different horse altogether. The idea behind this fraud is to run a good horse under the name of a horse with a poor public record, thus ensuring long odds for a virtual certainty. The risk of detection, of course, is considerable, for once the supposed poorer horse begins a winning sequence, all kinds of suspicions are aroused. It is seldom, then, that crooks playing this particular fraud, continue with the same horse after a successful coup.

In 1948, a horse named Peaceful William was a reluctant runner and was switched with Stellar City, a colt which had run successfully in Ireland. Stellar City was brought over to England, ran as Peaceful William and netted a big coup for the swindlers. Both horses were brown colts, and even to the expert eye, bore a striking resemblance to each other. Not content with this success, Stellar City was entered for other races in the name of Peaceful William, and with equal success. Meanwhile, the Jockey Club, through its Stewards, was taking a keen interest in the horse, but not for the same reason as its owners. Any horse which has had a

bad or indifferent record and then begins a winning sequence at long odds, automatically becomes the object of the Jockey Club's curiosity. Nearly always, of course, it is merely a matter of a horse having been backward, or of having been placed in the wrong type of race. All the same, the Club watches these matters, and they certainly watched the performances of Stellar City.

Then someone began to talk, and the Jockey Club's curiosity turned to suspicion. Scotland Yard was consulted, and the Fraud Squad made discreet inquiries. As a result, all doubt was removed, and among the conclusive evidence was a Press photograph taken as the horse was being led in after a win. It wore a medallion on its forehead, but this had slipped, revealing a white star. The records showed that Peaceful William had no such markings; two men were arrested and subsequently sentenced to eighteen months imprisonment for fraud.

* * * *

But one of the most remarkable racing frauds, and one which called for a high degree of detective skill and patient inquiry, was the Francasal case, another example of substitution.

At a few minutes after two o'clock on the afternoon of 16th July, 1953, a horse named Francasal won the Spa Selling Plate at Bath by two lengths at odds of 10-1. It was an unimportant race, and yet a number of bookmakers all over the country had taken a large sum of money on the winner, and at least £60,000 was due to be paid out. But none of these bookmakers knew the extent of the money laid, and the result was that the starting-price was 10-1 against.

Half an hour before the race was due to be run, the special cable service, known as the "blower", had failed. The bookmaking offices were thus cut off from news of the betting movements. When it was revealed that there had been such heavy betting, and that the "blower" had failed, there was immediate suspicion.

No time was lost in reporting these suspicions to the police, and even less in calling in the Yard. The officers assigned to the case set out to establish two facts—the identity of the people who had put on the money to win £60,000, and whether or not the "blower"

failure had been deliberate. The answer to the second question was obtained almost at once, when maintenance engineers discovered that there had been deliberate interference with the wires. The C.I.D. made further inquiries, and a roadman who had been working near Bath on 16th July reported that he had seen two men drive up in a car. One of them climbed a ladder, and with an acetylene lamp burned through the telephone cable which was used for the "blower" service. The time was half-past one in the afternoon.

In the meantime, the Yard found out from the various bookmakers that heavy bets had been "laid-off" by another firm of bookmakers, J. Davidson & Co., of London. This immediately raised two vital questions. How well did the bookmakers know Davidson? Had they done much business with this firm before? A curious answer was given to both these questions. J. Davidson & Co. had opened accounts between the months of March and July, with the obvious intentions of laying-off bets with other bookmakers. But they had done no business with these other firms until 16th July. With infinite patience the Yard probed further into the history of this firm. In March the business had been for sale, when it was bought by two men who gave their names as Colquhoun and Williams. Colquhoun's real name was Dill, a bloodstock breeder, and Williams hid the identity of a bookmaker named Kately.

For reasons which had little to do with the case, Kately had used the name of William Maurice Williams, whose occupation was said to be that of a decorator, but who was known in horse racing and greyhound circles as a heavy and reasonably successful backer. But the real importance of Williams was that he owned Francasal.

So far the whole affair looked as if it were a deliberately planned betting coup, and when he was interviewed by the Yard, Williams volunteered the information and admitted quite freely that he had bought the firm of Davidson & Co. for this very purpose. This, he said, accounted for the fact that the firm had done no business until the fateful day in July. Its sole function was to be the agent through which the coup should be pulled off.

There was nothing wrong, of course, in all this. Big betting coups are a normal part of the business of horse-racing. There remained the established fact, however, that the "blower" system had been tampered with. But although there was no doubt about this, the Yard were faced by the fact that the roadman at Bath could not identify the two men who had cut the cable; and this made it unlikely that his evidence would be of any value in court.

Inquiries through the British Bloodstock Agency showed that Kately, using Williams' name, had bought Santa Amaro in France, and had followed this with the purchase of another horse, also in France, named Francasal. Questioned by the Yard on this point, Kately replied that he was not altogether satisfied with Santa Amaro, and had bought Francasal to improve the chances of the coup.

But the news from France brought a different explanation. Santa Amaro had been quite a successful horse. Francasal, on the other hand, had been an indifferent performer.

The Yard's inquiries were then concentrated on tracing the movements of the two horses after their arrival in England. Santa Amaro arrived at Folkestone on May 12th, and Francasal on July 5th or 6th. Both horses had been sent to stables belonging to someone named Webster at Sonning Common in Berkshire. Four or five days after the arrival of Francasal, Kately had visited K. Bailey, who then trained at Epsom, and arranged for a horse to be sent there in preparation for the Spa Selling Plate. The trainer was told that the horse's name was Francasal. It was in fact Santa Amaro. Webster, then, was left with Francasal and Bailey had Santa Amaro, and neither of the men knew, of course, that Santa Amaro was to run in Francasal's name.

A most significant and vital point then emerged from information given by Bailey. Kately had told him that the horse was to be bought at the end of the race whatever price it fetched. It is, of course, a condition of entering a selling race that the winner must be put up for sale after the race, and the owner can join in the bidding if he wishes. Now Kately had not only insisted that the horse should be bought in at any price, but he also seemed exceptionally confident that it would win. It was obvious,

however, that Francasal's previous form did not justify this unqualified optimism, even in a poor quality race such as the Spa Seller. The Yard considered this point, and after discussing it with racing experts, it seemed reasonable to suppose that if Santa Amaro had indeed run under the name of Francasal, then it would have outstripped the field.

Another point to which the Yard attached great importance was the fact that both horses were so alike in appearance that it was almost impossible, without a detailed examination, to tell the one from the other. But examinations by veterinary surgeons established that there had undoubtedly been a switch, and that it was Santa Amaro which had won the race. Williams and his associates in the coup, all of whom had been interviewed by the Yard, were no longer able to deny that a switch had taken place. Williams himself, the inspiration of the scheme, denied that he had any knowledge of it, especially, as he asserted, he had had no responsibility for the stabling arrangements. He never moved an inch away from his story that, so far as he was concerned, this was a normal betting coup.

Obvious as the case looked on paper, there was just a chance that a genuine mistake had been made in the identification of the two horses, and especially as a number of people had been quite unable to tell the one horse from the other. This was the point which the defence hammered home, and so successfully, that the jury disagreed and were discharged. The defendants were put on trial again, and this time, after long consideration, the new jury found them guilty.

There was never any evidence to show that the defendants had anything to do with the cutting of the "blower" cable. If it was part of the plan behind the coup, it is ironical that it should have been the one fact which had brought the police on to the scene. If the "blower" had been in action, the odds, of course, would have been much shorter, but at least the coup might well have succeeded.

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Fraudulent financiers and racecourse ringers provide the type of case which make the newspaper headlines and bring publicity to

the Fraud Squad. But behind the sensationalism of the big case there is the less ambitious type which is handled by one or other of the criminal investigation departments and rarely calls for the help of the Fraud Squad. Many of these smaller frauds are among the oldest tricks in the world, but year after year scores of people are taken in by them. One of the hardest annuals of them all, is the bottle of whisky trick. A man calls at a house in a quiet residential neighbourhood and says that he is the driver of a lorry or van which has been involved in a collision. A load of whisky had been on the vehicle but only two or three bottles had been saved. He supposes that the man or woman wouldn't care to buy it for, say, a pound; it would save all the trouble of booking-in the little which remains after such a serious smash.

It is surprising how many people are willing to buy a bottle of whisky, or other goods for that matter, at a reduced price, and to be a party to a small deception. And it is equally surprising that they never question the contents of the bottle, only to find later that it contains no more than coloured water. If they should ask to examine it in the first place, then the seller becomes highly indignant and walks off with the bottle. Most people, however, do not ask.

* * * *

The prospect of obtaining something, if not for nothing, at least for a "bargain" price, is responsible for the continuation of another ancient swindle, the mock auction. Despite prosecutions and the publicity which this type of swindle receives from time to time, the mock auction and the mock auctioneer continue to flourish.

In their book, *Criminal Investigation*, which they adapted from the classic *System Der Kriminalistik*, Dr. Hans Gross, John Adam, and J. Collyer Adam give the following description of the tactics used in this type of fraud:

"The articles offered for sale at public auctions of this kind, generally known as 'swag' or 'gear', are for the most part specially manufactured and imported. Every 'run-out' shop acquires the same type of goods—jewellery, cutlery, plated goods, field-glasses,

etc.—which, though of inferior manufacture, are got up to have the stamp of quality.

“To bolster up the project, posters and bills are printed and exhibited in and around the shop or ‘pitch’ announcing that the stock, consisting of watches, jewellery, clocks and other plated goods (belonging to some fictitious jeweller or person), is to be sold by public auction without reservation. The shop will also be dressed up with some other goods known as ‘flash’. Amongst these better goods are sometimes genuine antiques, and the ‘flash’ will be displayed to advantage to stage a successful run of gulling the public.

“The staff, skilled at this type of fraud, generally consist of two auctioneers or ‘hammerers’—on whom the success of the business hinges—two ‘pitch getters’ and ‘floormen’, a doorman and a clerk. . . .

“The would-be purchasers are then collected by vociferous and swaggering descriptions of the stock for sale and certain of the articles, known as “the plunder”, are knocked down by the hammerer at a low figure to create interest. Mingling with those present are confederates of the operators known as ‘ricks’ or ‘gees’. They pass off easily as members of the public attending the auction, but they are in complete harmony with the hammerer and others by pre-arranged signs, slang or vernacular.

“Carrying on selling the plunder ‘half straight’ as it is known, the hammerer by now has been able to instil confidence into the audience through the ‘gees’ and will, within a short time, know the wealthier persons in the gathering. These are known as ‘sarkers’ and the hammerer fastens on to them. The next line taken is the ‘gazoomphing’ of the sarker, who is offered a rolled-gold hunter watch or some other article, costing wholesale in the region of £3. Some play is made of the merits of this well-known make of watch and with growing interest the sarker is persuaded to make the last bid of say £6. On this being handed over, the hammerer displays it with the watch. The first ‘gazoomph’ is about to be worked, and let us assume that it is the aim to gazoomph the sarker for £15 and subsequently £45. An article, costing say £4 10s. such as a tea and

coffee set, of very trashy quality but extremely well got up, is offered for sale.

“The hammerer with all his guile and overstatement of the quality of the article, places an exaggerated value on it and the bidding is then run up with the co-operation of his confederates, to within one pound of the fifteen. The sarker is enticed to make the extra pound bid but, in fact, such a bid is far from the wish or intention of the hammerer. Should the sarker make such a bid, however, the fact is known as ‘coming on the gazoomph straight’, i.e. the working of the gazoomph is foiled, though still to the sarker’s detriment.

“On the other hand, let us suppose that the sarker declines to bid the extra pound as has all along been intended, the gazoomph is worked in this way. During a lull, a challenge is made to the sarker that perhaps it may be a matter of cash with him, and the hammerer proceeds to say that he is going to offer a special discount to the sarker for bidding £6 for the watch. The intended victim is then asked if he will bid £15 if given the money to help pay for it and sometimes the hammerer gets a positive answer.

“The watch, the tea and coffee set are then exhibited, and the hammerer, with much flare, offers to make a present of the £6 and the watch to the sarker, stating, and getting the potential victim to agree, that £6 in cash and £6 in property amounts to £12. The money paid in the first place for the watch is placed on top of the two lots, and he is asked to pay £15 for the whole. In the vast majority of instances the sarker will fall into the trap and bid, being under the mistaken belief that his own £6 will be returned to him as well as the watch, by tendering a bid for £15 for the tea and coffee set. The next move is on. A larger and more imposing canteen of cutlery, costing wholesale in the region of £11, is offered for sale. The bidding is advanced with the connivance of the ‘ricks’ or ‘gees’ to within a pound of £45. During the bidding it is made known to the audience that the value is well beyond this figure. Meanwhile the dupe is entirely disregarded. At last the hammerer announces he does not wish the lot to go to a dealer but would prefer a person who has already been a customer to have

the opportunity to buy this bargain. He thereupon directs his attention to the sarker and presses him for a bid of £45. Upon refusal the gazoomph is brought into play.

“The sarker is reminded that he has been treated well and will be so favoured a second time. The first two lots are put up with the canteen, and his cash already handed over to the extent of £21 is placed on top of them as a present. The sarker is finally induced to bid £45 the lot, and the gazoomph has matured, much to his later misgiving. It will be obvious, following the method used, he has been ‘nailed’ for £6 on the watch, then he gazoomphed for £15 for the tea and coffee set and finally gazoomphed for £45 for the canteen of cutlery. For goods costing wholesale £15 17s. 6d. the victim has spent exactly £45. Seldom, if ever, does the buyer complain or ‘turn bogey’, as it is termed, because of reluctance to advertise his foolishness. . . .”

* * * *

Equally old is the confidence trickster who preys on holiday-makers, and especially visitors from abroad. The tactics vary. One favourite method is for the trickster to take a room in an hotel, and then watch for suitable victims. He introduces himself as a temporary visitor, who is waiting to hear from his firm, who are sending him instructions to move overseas. Confidence is built up and a mutual acquaintanceship, if not friendship, is formed. The trickster ingratiates himself and proves to be a helpful guide to the district.

A telegram arrives for him. It instructs him to go abroad, to the East, and says that he is to join an aircraft at an early hour on Monday morning. The telegram arrives on Thursday evening. In addition to these instructions, it states that a draft is being sent under separate cover so that he can buy tropical clothes for his new destination.

The scene is now set for the next act. The friends are informed that there are only a few days left before they must say good-bye to their charming and helpful companion. On the next day, Friday, the young man is clearly preoccupied and perplexed. The friends ask what is wrong. He says that his money draft has not

arrived, and that he will have to ring the company if it does not come by midday.

During the morning he makes a great show of inquiring at the desk for any mail. At luncheon he still has not telephoned the company. He does not eat much, and it is obvious that he is a worried young man. Reluctantly, and with the embarrassment that one would expect of so charming a young man, he says that he cannot go to his own bank because he is leaving England for a number of years and had drawn out what little money he had there.

At that very point he glances at his watch, excuses himself from the table, and goes off to make his phone call. Ten minutes pass and he comes back, a little less anxious. The company have assured him that the money has been sent. As he had guessed, his companions had discussed this while he had been away. They realize that with only Saturday morning left he has very little time in which to cash his draft and buy his clothes. They offer to lend him the money, a sum of about £50. Of course he refuses and of course they insist. They are even more helpful. They will let him have the money that very afternoon so that he can buy his clothes. That will then leave them free to have the whole Saturday afternoon together and give them an opportunity to repay him for his kindness during their stay.

Once he had the money that, of course, was the last the visitors saw of him. At first, there appeared to be no cause for worry, but as dinner time approached they began to get anxious. Perhaps there had been an accident. They ask at the desk. No, the gentleman had not come back.

Dinner time passes and still no news. Again they speak to the management, and to that experienced staff this now sounded like one of the world's oldest confidence tricks. The manager of the hotel, although he does not want the publicity, suggests that they inform the police. The young man's friends are unwilling to do so as they just cannot believe that they have been so cruelly deceived by someone so charming.

They still have a pathetic belief in the idea of an accident. But the manager assures them that if the young man had been run

over or taken ill there would almost certainly be some identification on him. The manager rings the police to enquire if there has been an accident. No accident has been reported to the police during the time that the young man had left the hotel. At last they are convinced that they have been swindled, and they are persuaded to report the matter to the police. By the time the detective arrives at the hotel many precious hours have been lost, and the swindler has gained a good start.

The detective sets the routine in motion. A description, together with the details of the alleged crime, are telephoned to the local records office. Nothing is known of him there, but that was not altogether unexpected because if he had been convicted before the chances were that it would be the Yard C.R.O. that would have the particulars. But the Yard had no record of him by the name which he had given to his victims, but there was a record of a young man who had been carrying out just that sort of crime.

In the morning, the detective made more inquiries of the trickster's alleged employers, but they had never heard of him. Meanwhile, the day telephone staff were asked about any calls which the young man had made during the previous day. One girl remembered him making a call to a seaside resort. No, she did not remember the number, but she did remember the name of the town. The detective considered the hotels in that cosmopolitan town, and there was one which appeared to provide the right type of hunting ground for this type of trickster. So a message was put through—would they please check in the hotel to see if among recent arrivals there was a young man answering to the description given.

A quarter of an hour later the answer came back. Although the receptionist could not be quite certain, of course, it was believed that there was such a young man in the hotel. The local police were then asked to put a plain clothes officer in the hotel to shadow the suspect. Without further delay, the detective drove the fifty or sixty miles to the seaside town, accompanied by the reluctant friends, for the purpose of identification.

When they arrived at the hotel, the local plain clothes man reported that the suspect was in the bar talking to three men. From



Photo. Topical

12 1936. Cardiff shop murder. The blood-stained room in which Stephen Gilbert was murdered. The position of the body when found can be clearly seen by the chalk outline made by the police.



13. 1954. Detectives search the yard of a building in South Hill Park, where was discovered the unmarked burial. Photo: Kertalan.

a discreet vantage point his dupes identified him, and the detective arrested him just at the moment when he was telling the three men, who were Australian visitors, that he was staying there for a few days until his firm sent him orders to go abroad. . . .

No doubt many people who read this will say that it is incredible that anyone should have been taken-in so easily. Surely they would at least have asked to see the telegram? Well, perhaps they were not very smart people, but the police records show that there are thousands of people every year who are deceived by some form of confidence trick. It may be a tale of bad luck, of letters having gone astray, of death with the inevitable legacy, of sickness or some other disaster. And those who are duped are not all just sentimental folk, but their numbers include shrewd business men and women.

The confidence trick is based on the psychological principle that most people do not like to ask questions. Confidence having been established, the potential victims feel that it would be embarrassing to doubt their companion. "I could not very well ask him that, could I?" are the ten words which are the confidence trickster's passport to success. But the extraordinary thing is that he is very seldom doubted until it is too late. Another invaluable ally is the well-established fact of the unwillingness of many victims to admit that they have been swindled.

I was once staying in Holland when a young British National Serviceman walked into an Amsterdam hotel and asked the porter if he could direct him to another hotel which he named. The porter had never heard of it, so the soldier then produced a Roneoed booking coupon which showed that he had paid a deposit to a "travel agency" for a tour which was to start from Amsterdam the following morning. This form instructed the soldier to report to a certain hotel. The porter looked through the register of hotels, but there was no sign of it. Then, with the characteristic helpfulness of the Dutch people, he telephoned the police, who confirmed that there was no such hotel in Amsterdam.

This soldier was yet another victim of a trick which was practised so often on the Continental trains which took troops on leave from Germany and other centres. Quite a number of troops set

out on leave without any set plans, except perhaps to stay at a leave centre, if there is one, or somewhere else where arrangements are made to board soldiers on leave. Tricksters travelled the trains and sold false tours and accommodation. Some propositions were accompanied by a cheaply printed but gaudy-looking leaflet, and it all looks more exciting than the prospect of staying at a normal leave centre. The soldiers pays his deposit, but, like the unhappy Serviceman in Amsterdam, when he arrives at his destination he discovers that no one has ever heard of the agency, the hotel, or the proposed tour.

This tour racket went on for some years. Because so many soldiers have been defrauded, it is now not so easy to work. When the train-travelling trick became too well known, troops on leave were waylaid at the terminal station or in nearby cafés.

Everyone who learns of the trick is inclined to be contemptuous of those who are deceived by it. Yet many an experienced soldier who has served in many parts of the world, and who would not be swindled for a coin in the bazaars or markets of the East, has been taken-in by a soft-voiced, persuasive man on the train or in a café. When the travel agent's representative has been a good-looking, attractive and smartly-dressed girl, the trick is even easier.

It is characteristic of most confidence tricksters and raisers of money by false pretences that they are intelligent and often well educated men and women. Almost invariably they would have done well in some other, honest occupation. And there is no better example of that than the story of John Donald Merritt, alias Ronald John Chesney, alias John Donald Milner, who can truly be described as a master swindler.

THE MASTER SWINDLER

ONE DAY in 1926 an eighteen-years-old Edinburgh University student named John Donald Merritt walked into the kitchen of his flat and told the maid that his mother had shot herself. The woman was taken to the Royal Infirmary where she died a fortnight later. At the beginning of this tragedy no one doubted that here was a clear case of suicide. But during Mrs. Merritt's few conscious moments she denied that she had committed suicide and persisted in that denial until she died.

Although she was semi-conscious when she made her protests, she was also delirious, and neither the Edinburgh police nor the hospital authorities took them as seriously as if they had been made in normal circumstances. Nevertheless, the police made some routine inquiries, the results of which caused them to consider the possibility that the woman had in fact been murdered.

A distinguished pathologist, Professor Littlejohn, was extremely doubtful if the woman could have moved her arm into the position from which the shot had been fired. And the inquiries which the police made into the private life of John Donald Merritt produced considerable evidence to show that he had motive enough to kill his mother.

Mrs. Merritt was a comfortably-off widow, but she allowed her undergraduate son only ten shillings a week. Even in pre-war days this was a small enough sum as pocket money for a young man, but for a youth who spent his time and money on women and on a gay night life it was totally inadequate. Further inquiries showed that he had forged her signature on cheques which he had cashed. He was charged with the murder of his mother and was put on trial for his life before the Lord Justice Clerk of Edinburgh, Lord Alness, and a jury. On the face of it, the case for the prosecution was overwhelming. As counsel for the prosecution built up that

case, as witnesses were called and cross-examined, as evidence was produced to show that Merritt had forged his mother's signature on cheques to finance a life of extravagance and debauchery, the pattern of guilt seemed to be complete. And then there occurred one of those incidents which every counsel for the defence hopes for in any murder trial—a sharp disagreement among the experts.

Professor Littlejohn demonstrated in court his theory that it was almost impossible for the woman to have shot herself. In reply, the defence called that most eminent of all pathologists, Mr. (later Sir) Bernard Spilsbury, who took a different view. While he did not say emphatically that Mrs. Merritt had used the revolver on herself, he did say with considerable emphasis that the position of the wound, the condition of the burnt flesh round it, were not “inconsistent with the theory of suicide”. He, too, demonstrated his theory in court, and showed that there was substance in defending counsel's contention that it was possible for Mrs. Merritt to have twisted her arm to the necessary angle. Counsel had based his theory on the fact that her arm and shoulder muscles were more flexible than those of a man because she used them more often to dress her long hair.

A great battle took place between these two forensic experts. In those days, and indeed up to the time he retired, Bernard Spilsbury occupied an almost unique position. For years his opinions had gone unchallenged in scores of cases, and he earned a reputation of being infallible. “If Spilsbury says so it must be so”, was a view taken by many juries. An entirely unsensational, reserved, modest, shy man, he had become a sensational character because of the newspaper publicity which accompanied any case on which he was engaged, whether it was for the prosecution or for the defence.

Very occasionally his almost god-like judgments were challenged by other experts, but only rarely were such challenges successful. So high was Spilsbury's reputation that, unwittingly and unwillingly for a man of such integrity, he often became the vital and decisive witness. As I have shown before in this book, differences of opinion between expert witnesses always have an unsettling effect on a jury; and when a man such as Spilsbury was involved, his opinion usually swayed the jury one way or another.

I once sat on a series of juries at the Central Criminal Court at

the Old Bailey. I know the desperate anxiety of a jury not to make a mistake, and, at the same time, to see that justice is done. The evidence of experts can be confusing and difficult to follow. If, as a result of years of publicity, a world-famous man such as Spilsbury is faced by a no less able, but lesser-known forensic opponent, then it is not unnatural that the great man's evidence should be preferred.

And it was so preferred in the case of John Donald Merritt. Under Scottish law, of course, it is not necessary for a unanimous jury verdict, as the majority view is taken. In this case a verdict of Not Proven was returned, and Merritt was acquitted.

He did go to prison for twelve months, however, on a charge of uttering cheques forged in his mother's name.

While it may be true that many criminals turn to crime because they lack the advantages which other people have, this was certainly not true of Merritt or, as I shall now describe him, Ronald Chesney, since that was the name by which he became so notorious. His widowed mother had sent him to a famous British public school, from which he had been asked to leave for some dishonesty. It is true that his mother kept him short of money during his very short time as an undergraduate at Edinburgh, but she was not the only parent who had been frugal to the point of meanness with an extravagant son. Moreover, he knew that when he reached the age of twenty-five he would inherit about £60,000 from his grandfather's trust fund. He was intelligent, clever, with a gift for languages. With that as a background, and with a fortune ahead of him, Ronald Chesney could have achieved a great deal.

But with £60,000 beckoning him on, he saw no reason why he should have to work at all except to find an easy way to replenish that sum of money once he had started to spend it.

When he came out of prison there were still some six years to go before he could touch his inheritance. But he did not have to search very far for an easy way of living until his twenty-fifth birthday. During his trial a woman believed him to be a victim of circumstances, and that he needed help and sympathy. She was waiting for him when he left prison, and offered him a home. He returned that act of generosity by running away with her sixteen-years-old daughter and marrying her. But he did not lose the woman's friendship. Indeed, she treated him as if he were a son,

But she did not have the necessary money that Chesney required to keep his young wife in a style of life to which she was entirely unaccustomed.

Despite the fact that he had been convicted of forgery, he was certain that his forged cheques would never have been discovered had there not been inquiries into his mother's death. Confident, then, in his ability as a forger, he utilised his skill on a large scale, and he and his wife lived a life of extravagance and extreme luxury. But he was not clever enough to avoid another spell in prison before he came into his inheritance.

This vast fortune—worth perhaps about £200,000 in post-war days—was a spur to greater criminal efforts. But it was not a matter of crime for its own sake but as a means to an end. He bought a yacht, and as with anything else which he undertook, he could handle and navigate her with outstanding skill. He sailed this yacht single-handed to the Mediterranean, where he built up for himself, his wife, and his mother-in-law a life of extravagance which startled even the people who haunted the normally extravagant shores of the Mediterranean. His all-night parties on board were the talk of the coastal towns and provided the popular newspapers with chattering news items. His gambling efforts exceeded those of many of the greatest gamblers in the history of the casinos. And his losses were fantastically high.

But he did not gamble and give parties all the time. Every now and then the yacht would put in at North African ports, would moor alongside at Alexandria, the Piraeus, or drop anchor in the Persian Gulf. She was also seen at several of the Spanish ports.

Suspicious eyes were cast on this yacht and on Ronald Chesney's activities, and Interpol received many inquiries about his pursuits. There were international policemen and customs officers who were certain that he was engaged in the smuggling trade, and was making another fortune out of shipping Indian hemp and other raw materials for the drug trade. They were equally certain that he was smuggling contraband arms into Spain where the Civil War was then being fought.

But if there was suspicion, even certainty, there was no proof. He evaded every trap which was set for him, and maintained his life of luxury until the outbreak of war in 1939.

There is no doubt that his skill as a navigator and as a handler

of small boats had enabled him to run a good deal of his contraband drugs and arms ashore and so break the cordons which were placed round him. Deserted beaches, little-used and perhaps little-known creeks and inlets, were the places where Chesney put his goods ashore. In the small hours of the morning he transferred material from his yacht to other vessels which were bound for the ports where the drug and arms agents would take it over.

Chesney's skill as a sailor, and his particular knowledge of the Mediterranean, made him an ideal choice for the Royal Navy. Despite his criminal record, he managed to join the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve and had a most distinguished war record. Not for him the routine life on board one of His Majesty's conventional ships. The term Special Service Operations might have been invented solely for Chesney, who became a Lieutenant Commander, R.N.V.R., in command of his own yacht. The climax of his career was reached when the German Commander Rommel captured Tobruk in 1942. The navy's vessels, moored in Tobruk harbour, were obliged to withdraw, but Chesney stayed behind engaging the Germans until his yacht sank beneath him. The Germans took him prisoner.

But not even a P.O.W. camp in Italy could hold him, and he made a successful escape. Back he went into the Service and, in due course, back he went into trouble. The Navy had no further individual, danger-frought tasks to offer him, and eventually he found himself on routine work at Hamburg.

In 1946, he was sentenced by court martial to four month's imprisonment for stealing a car and petrol. A year later he was in trouble with the French police for using an assumed name and gaining illegal entry into France. In the following year the French authorities sent him to prison for twelve months for currency offences. Yet another year later, in 1949, he was in trouble again, this time in Belgium. A Brussels court sentenced him to four months for aiding and abetting the illegal entry of a German into the country. Still undefeated and unbroken, Chesney appealed, won his case, and was released. The Belgians deported him.

A month later, back in Britain, he was convicted at Marlborough Street Police Court, in London, and sent to prison for three months for what were popularly known as black-market offences. Most of these sentences had been accompanied by heavy fines, and

Chesney was now short of money, a condition which long spells in prison did not help.

Two years after the Marlborough Street sentence he was in bigger trouble, and this time he stood his trial at the Sussex Assizes at Lewes. He was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment on each of two charges of attempting to export currency and goods from Newhaven to the Continent. Just over a year later he was back in Belgium, where once more he tried to smuggle someone into the country. That cost him a month's liberty and a fine of 1,000 Belgian francs.

His life now was in striking contrast to the one he had lived in pre-war days with his yacht, his lavish spending, the numerous hangers-on whom he took to be his friends, and his presumably happy domestic life. Now there was very little money (at any rate by those pre-war standards), no yacht, no fabulous parties, no attempt to bring off vast coups at casinos. And his domestic life scarcely existed. He had already bigamously married a German girl, and now he wanted to marry another, a night-club hostess in Cologne. Whether he discussed this with his wife, and whether she refused to divorce him, is not reliably known. Even if she had refused, this would not by itself have caused him to murder her, but he could not risk another bigamous marriage in Germany, and he needed money to marry the blonde hostess. When he had inherited the £60,000 he had made a marriage settlement on his wife of £8,500. That money was still intact, but the only way he could obtain it was by her death. He then set out to plan what would appear to be an accidental death.

He thought about the idea for a long while, and even tried unsuccessfully to hire criminals to do the killing for him. Finally, he decided to do the job himself.

At this time his wife and her mother were living in an old people's home in a London suburb. No detective story or thriller has a more improbable, more fantastic design for murder than does the true-life story of Chesney's plan to kill his wife.

The whole plot depended on the perfect alibi. Chesney booked a room for himself at an hotel in Amsterdam; then, on the same night, using a forged passport and the assumed name of John Donald Milner, flew to London and entered the old people's home. He waited until his wife was taking a bath and then he drowned

her. All that remained for him to do was to leave the house unobserved, take a plane back to Amsterdam, and make it seem that he had never left the city.

But he was not unobserved, as his mother-in-law saw him after he had killed her daughter. Old lady though she was she tried to stop him from leaving. She put up a desperate fight but she, too, was murdered.

Despite the frantic bid which the old lady had made, no one heard or saw any signs of it; Chesney left the house, and boarded the K.L.M. aircraft for Amsterdam.

By the time the double murder was discovered Chesney was out of the country. But he was not in Amsterdam. All this took place in the month of February when flying plans are liable to be changed because of the weather. And the weather on the night of February 10-11th, 1954, was so bad that the K.L.M. flight was diverted to Dusseldorf, in Germany. He arrived there during the morning, much too late for his alibi now to be of any use to him. But he could not remain in Germany where, if he were suspected by the Metropolitan Police C.I.D. of the murder, they would certainly search for him, as the Yard knew that he had many German interests. To add to his difficulties a passport formality prevented his attempt to cross the frontier into Holland.

This was the end, and Chesney knew it. Not even his boldness, his skill, and his ingenuity could find a way out of this last impasse. Four days later he was found dead in a wood outside Cologne. He had shot himself through the mouth.

But that was not the end of the Chesney story. On the morning of February 11th, the C.I.D., under Detective Superintendent Daws, had investigated the double murder. Although there was no doubt that it was murder, the guilty man had cleaned up all signs of the struggle where the old lady had died. In the bathroom, too, he had been equally meticulous, even to the extent of committing that oldest of all mistakes—and one which provides the hoariest of all plots in bad detective stories—of removing every fingerprint so that not even those of the victim could be found.

Enough evidence was found, however, to make Superintendent Daws certain that Chesney was the man they wanted. A search was immediately put into operation. It was not only nation-wide, but Interpol was also asked to help. While every British police

force was looking for him as well, the Yard, through Interpol, had inquiries made in Germany. The places he used regularly were searched; they included the club where the German girl worked, and her home, but with no result. On the morning of February 16th, a radio message from Wiesbaden was received via Interpol at the Yard. It described the finding of a man's body in a wood near Cologne. The Germans had in their possession a British passport in the name of John Donald Milner. Inside the passport was a piece of paper which named his German girl-friend as his sole heir.

If this was Chesney, and from the description of the corpse there seemed little doubt that it was, there remained the solution of the double murder in the old people's home. The law demands tidiness. Before Detective Superintendent Daws could report the case closed he had to prove beyond doubt not only that the body was that of Chesney, but also that he had committed the double murder.

Since Chesney could not be questioned, the Yard sent a message asking that every piece of his clothing should be preserved intact, that his blood group should be established, that specimens of his hair should be sent to the Yard for analysis, and that a photograph should be taken of any scratches and cuts on his hands, arms, and face.

Superintendent Daws went to Cologne to examine the body, which was brought back to England for the final forensic proof that Ronald Chesney was guilty of the double murder. There were numerous scratches and cuts on the hands and arms. In the Metropolitan Police laboratory the examination of the fingernail deposits showed extensive traces of the wool fibres which corresponded exactly to those of the jumper which the old lady had been wearing at the time. Hairs found on Chesney's clothes matched those from the old lady's head and those from her two dogs. And the hairs which the laboratory had found on her clothes matched those of Chesney.

AT THE SCENE OF THE CRIME

ALTHOUGH Ronald Chesney might be described as the nearest approach to the master criminal to be found outside the pages of sensational fiction, it was team-work and not the single master-stroke of one detective which proved him to have been a double murderer.

Many small crimes and offences can, of course, be solved as a rule by one detective, but any major offence requires extensive team-work and brilliant organization.

If we take an imaginary, composite crime we can see how that organization and team-work operate. The case which I will examine is based partly on fact, but the circumstances have been adapted to show as wide an aspect as possible of what happens when the C.I.D. arrive at the scene of the crime.

One winter's night two men broke into a warehouse in a provincial city, and overpowered the security guard. They had scarcely finished binding and gagging him when a second watchman, who had been patrolling another part of the building, saw what was happening and ran off to dial 999. The appearance of this second guard upset the well-laid plans of the hold-up men. They had carried out a long, patient observation of the premises for some weeks before they made their attempt, but only two nights previously, and unknown to the men, the owners had decided to double the security guards. As the second guard ran off to raise the alarm, the two hold-up men chased him across a yard where he was making for an office and a telephone. They overtook him inside the office, where he turned and fought them where he stood. After a gallant struggle he was coshed and left unconscious. Now their plans were ruined, as they had not set out with the intentions of using violence except for the binding and gagging of security guards. They realized that the whole scheme

had miscarried and they were now concerned only with escape. They stopped long enough, however, to cut the telephone wires in the office. Leaving the second security guard lying unconscious on the floor they climbed a wall, dropped down on to some waste ground, beyond which was their car.

Some time later the second guard recovered, staggered to the telephone, saw that the wires had been cut, and then crawled to another office in the building and dialled 999. Within a few minutes a police patrol car arrived and the man told the crew of two what had happened.

The well-trained patrol men knew exactly what to do—and, more important, exactly what not to do. While one attended to the two injured men, the other telephoned the C.I.D. office, and within a few minutes of the receipt of the call a car with a Detective Superintendent, a Detective Sergeant, a photographer, and the fingerprint team, arrived at the factory.

It was essential at this early stage that the information telephoned by the patrol constable included more than a mere report that a crime had been committed. Although much of the information which he had gained from the injured security guards was hazy, it was the officer's responsibility to give as precise, as clear, and as accurate an account as he could over the telephone. Without that, it would be impossible for the crime-fighting organization to go into immediate action. From the details given by the two security guards the C.I.D. office was able to make an on-the-spot check among its own criminal records to see if there was any description which resembled that of the two hold-up men. As it happened, the files had nothing that was of any use, and a call was put through to C.R.O. at the Yard. Meanwhile, all patrol cars were told by radio to look out for a car, to make for the roads that led out of the city, throw a cordon round the entire area, and to set up road blocks. Neighbouring police forces were similarly warned.

It is imperative, at the beginning of any investigation, that nothing is touched or disturbed in any way until the detective in charge has carried out his preliminary inquiries, the photographer has taken his pictures, and the fingerprint experts have gone over

the place for impressions. If the uniformed police arrive first at the scene, and it generally happens that they do, their main job, once they have reported to the C.I.D., is to see that nothing is disturbed. The greatest dangers to the swift solution of a crime are owners of property and similar people who have been told of the incident. Not unnaturally, they want to see what is missing, but unless they are prevented from doing so, they may move some object and thus destroy invaluable evidence.

In this particular case the two security guards urgently needed hospital treatment, but it was clear that their clothes would most probably bear some signs of the struggle. An ambulance arrived, and the detective in charge sent one of his own officers to the hospital so that when the men's clothes were taken off, hairs, bloodstains or any other evidence would not be disturbed.

With the really urgent part of the investigations under control—the attempt to find out who the men were and to try to cut off their escape—the detective in charge was able to settle down and do his work unhurriedly and methodically. Time was still, of course, a vital factor, as these investigations might produce evidence which would help to find the men before they went into hiding. But to depart from the well-tried method of detection, might well mean that some small but significant, possibly decisive, clue would be overlooked.

Nevertheless, many things have to happen simultaneously. In this case the detective in charge spent a few minutes getting a “feel” of the job. While two of his men searched that part of the factory where the bandits had broken in, he concentrated on the office across the yard, and carried out a preliminary investigation. He indicated those places which had to be photographed and satisfied himself that the print experts were searching for impressions.

Meanwhile, people living in houses nearby, awakened by the sound of police cars arriving, were questioned. As so often happens in these circumstances, there were those who pretended to know more than they did, while others *thought* they had heard something. Some were frankly hostile because they had been disturbed from their sleep.

This is the moment when the traditional cool and calm of the professional policeman is invaluable. Like a good actor he settles his audience and sorts out their statements. He makes allowances for the inevitable exaggerations and is quick to sum-up the reliable witness.

Back in the office, and over to that part of the factory where the hold-up men had broken in, the fingerprint experts found no impressions or even suggestions of latents.

The area in the yard outside the office was examined next, but the first positive clues were found on the soft surface of the waste ground on the other side of the high wall. Here the detectives' probing torches found clearly-marked footprints. They were heavily indented where the two men had dropped down from the wall. The impressions varied across the ground to the road, where their car had been parked.

Three sets of prints were chosen for examination and possible identification. A bucket and two boxes were placed over them so that they could be protected until they were photographed in daylight.

Footprints can be important evidence not only for identification purposes, but also to help to build a picture of people wanted by the police. Clearly-defined prints can indicate whether they belong to a man, woman, or child. They can even give some idea of approximate age if they show a regular pattern, for although human walking habits are formed in early life, the length of the pace decreases with age. A general idea of size and weight of the owner can also be obtained, and the evenness or lack of variations in the impressions can reveal whether they are the footprints of someone who was running or walking, and whether they were moving slowly or quickly.

A boot or shoe maker or repairer, or a chiropodist, can tell if there is any deformity, whether the footwear has been recently repaired or is worn down, and the way in which a person walked.

In the composite case which I am describing the prints were re-examined soon after dawn and the selected ones photographed. The impressions trailed raggedly and unevenly with varying indentations across the field to the road. A close examination

supported by experts indicated that it was almost certain that one of the men had an injured left leg or foot, caused either by jumping from the wall or in the struggle with the security guard. With his companion he had begun to run across the ground, had stopped quite suddenly after a few yards, and had then been helped the rest of the way to the road. And the footprints of the uninjured man suggested that he was wearing a pair of badly-fitting shoes. That sort of evidence is important, too, because it often indicates that the wearer has stolen the shoes.

The two sets of clothing belonging to the security guards had been sent for urgent laboratory examination. Three minute bloodstains and several small strands of hair were discovered on the clothes of the guard who had fought the men in the office. Microscopic tests showed that these hairs were from a man between thirty and forty years of age, and that they were dark brown.

As a result of all this activity the police were able to issue some sort of description. The detectives knew from the two guards the approximate height and build of the two men; one of them was thick-set, and the second security guard had said that he was certainly about thirteen stone or more in weight. It was this man whose footprints indicated that his left leg or foot was injured. The other man, whose hair the guard had grabbed during that last desperate struggle before he had been struck down, was of medium height and weight. The detectives were now able to say that they were looking for two men—one aged between thirty and forty years of age, of medium height and build, with dark brown hair; he was possibly wearing, or was in possession of, a badly-fitting pair of shoes. The other man was tall, heavily-built, weighing between thirteen or fourteen stone, probably walked with a limp.

All the work at the scene of the crime having been done, the detective in charge can write his preliminary report. Police reports are vitally important. They follow a set pattern from which there must be no deviations. Even the phraseology is largely predetermined, and many superior people are scornful of phrases such as “acting on information received I proceeded to 16b Danstance

Close, where I saw the accused at 3 p.m. I informed him that I had reason to believe he had seen the deceased earlier that day. At the same time Detective Constable Matthews kept the premises next door under observation". The hackneyed phrase, the cliché, the constant repetition of certain words and phrases, make for tedious reading and listening. I once heard a non-stipendiary magistrate on a local bench protest at what he called "the worn-down stepping stones of the average policeman's English".

But there is good sense behind this insistence on a familiar style. It ensures that everyone whose business it is to read or listen to these reports knows exactly what they mean. The literary policeman with ambitions to write good English, to vary his phraseology, to make reports flash and sparkle with fine imaginative words, must find other outlets for his talent. The "proceeded" to the scene of the crime could become a more obscure word, or a word open to argument and different interpretation by judges, juries, counsel, and solicitors.

If police reports are not models for style they are models for brevity and conciseness so far as facts and their presentation are concerned, and many other reports could follow their example with advantage. Vague descriptions such as "near the door", or "not far from the kitchen", or "some yards up the road" are useless. Exact distances, measurements, and times must be given whenever it is possible to do so, and the word approximately must be used only when a fact is unknown.

Descriptions of the scene of the crime must follow a logical sequence. To describe something as being "on the left" or "on the right" will be confusing unless "left" or "right" is related to an object which is clearly stated in the report. To the detective at the scene of the crime vague descriptions such as these may be clear enough, but to other people who have not been there they are confusing and ambiguous. It is therefore essential to give a precisely accurate description of the scene of the crime as it was when the detective first arrived—to show just where the body was, where and how a murderer or burglar had entered.

All notes and details, at any rate for the preliminary report, must be made before anything is touched or moved. The report must be

accompanied by sketches and plans, and used in conjunction with photographs taken at the scene of the crime.

To distinguish between the relevant and the irrelevant is the most difficult part of the preparation of a report. This cannot always be decided when a report is first made, and yet the omission of one small detail can mean success or failure. Sometimes a fact which seems at first to be of no importance, or which is overlooked, proves to be decisive. If it is something which recurs, such as the time the tide rises or falls, then the detective can check from existing records. On the other hand, decisive evidence might be required about a door. Was it open or closed at a material time? Proof could probably be obtained when the detective or other police officers arrived. But if it was not noticed, or if it was ignored and no positive record made, such an omission might be fatal. As I have pointed out before, the case for the prosecution, which is based almost entirely on what the detective observes and deduces, is subject to skilled cross-examination. No police officer will survive that examination if he says that "so far as I can recall, the door was open".

Many detective-story writers dismiss the work at the scene of the crime in a page or so. Fictional detectives, especially when they are amateurs, perform their brilliant feats elsewhere. In reality however, almost every case succeeds or fails as a result of those first on-the-spot investigations.

This happened in the case which I have used as a basis for this Chapter. The precise description of the wanted men, the rapid transmission of that information, enabled a patrol car crew to identify a limping man, who "answered to the description" leaving a public house, and he was detained. His companion was traced, and the clues which were discovered at the scene of the crime brought the men to justice.

In this Chapter, I have shown how the scene of the crime organization works as a general principle. In the next Chapter, a real-life case shows it in action.

THE BODY IN THE BUSHES

A RETIRED police constable was out for a walk near Bedford, in August 1944, when his dog discovered a dead body hidden among some bushes in an area known as the Kempston Ballast Hole. He reported it to the Kempston Police Station, and as a result of a local post-mortem examination murder was suspected. The body was that of a young man. Whether he had been murdered or not, he had certainly met his death by violence and not by accident, as the fracture of the skull showed.

Two days later the Chief Constable of Bedfordshire decided to call in Scotland Yard. Chief Inspector (later Chief Detective Superintendent) Peter Beveridge was put in charge of the case, and with him went Detective Sergeant (later Detective Superintendent) Hannam, and pathologist Dr. Keith Simpson.

The men from the Yard, together with the local police, visited the scene of the crime as soon as they arrived at Kempston. They were faced with the difficulty which is inseparable from all cases of murder, or suspected murder, which have occurred in the open or in a public place. Although the Bedford police had, as the newspapers put it, sealed-off the area so that any clues or information should be untouched, the body had been hidden in the bushes for several days. During that time the Kempston Ballast Hole area had been open to the public. Fortunately, with its waste land, its disused railway sidings, sleepers and trucks, its depressing and squalid collection of tins, garbage and refuse, its gorse-bushes and dried-up grass, it did not attract visitors; one person walking over the ground could have been enough to disturb or destroy essential clues.

Chief Inspector Beveridge organized and led his first search among the dense bush and scrub where the body had been found. His first assessment, as it was indeed of everyone there, was that

there was no doubt at all that this was murder case. Although Dr. Simpson had yet to examine the body, the previous examination had proved beyond doubt that the savage blows could not have been self-inflicted or caused by an accident. Someone had gone to a great deal of trouble to hide the body, as it had been well concealed in some elder bushes, and some more foliage had been placed in front of the bushes. But for the retired policeman's dog the body might have been there for months without being discovered.

In the intense heat of an August day the detectives examined every piece of the place where the body had been and a large area round it. This type of search always presents difficulties, especially if the weather is very hot or very cold or if there is heavy rain. Real self-discipline is required. There is always a tendency to relax, to feel that this is something of a formality. Probably hundreds of such searches take place each year, most of them with no result.

At the Kempston Ballast Hole special care and alertness were needed on that blazing August day. This dreary waste and rubbish dump was the last home of reams of old waste paper, including newspapers. Every scrap of paper was examined, every newspaper looked at to see if it carried a date after the estimated time of the death. But they were all old editions. It was among the nondescript collection of rubbish a few yards away from where the body had been found, however, that the search was rewarded by two positive clues. First, the team found one or two pieces of a girl's photograph. The search was intensified and some more pieces were discovered until there were enough to make a complete picture. The second object was a loop which had been torn off a man's trouser-brace.

Back at the mortuary, Dr. Simpson carried out his preliminary post-mortem before the corpse was sent to Guy's Hospital, where the pathologist could have better opportunities of examining it in detail. He was able to tell Chief Inspector Beveridge that death had occurred about ten days to a fortnight previously, that the assault had taken place a few yards away from the actual spot where the body was found, and that the body had been dragged there by one

person. It was during this process that the seat of the trousers had parted from the brace loop which had been found at the Kempston Ballast Hole.

The most important result of that first day's work was, of course, the discovery of the torn photograph. A woman constable of the Bedfordshire Constabulary recognized the portrait as being that of a girl who was well known in the local dance halls. Detectives soon found her, and she was able to say that the clothes of the dead man belonged to her 22-years-old cousin, Robert Smith. She had not seen her cousin since August 6th. He had been working for a firewood merchant. As a result of further questions the girl said that he was very friendly with his employer's 16-years-old son, Kenneth Gribble. Inquiries revealed that Smith had been missing since August 6th, but there was nothing unusual in the fact that no one had reported this because he was known to do casual work.

Chief Inspector Beveridge did not interview young Gribble immediately. He wanted to find out something about him first; and something, too, about his friendship with Robert Smith.

When the interview did take place, Kenneth Gribble said that he had not seen his friend since the afternoon of August 6th. The Chief Inspector pressed him for a more exact time and place. Gribble thought it had been about midday on that Sunday, and he named a meeting place where, he said, he had paid Robert Smith his week's wages. The Chief Inspector asked him if he knew the Kempston Ballast Hole. Of course he did. Everyone knew it. When had he last been there? About six months previously. Had he been there then with Robert Smith? No, he had not. Had he ever been there with Robert Smith? No, he had not. He was quite sure about that? Yes, he was positive.

The Chief Inspector had gained a quite definite result from his discreet inquiries about Kenneth Gribble before this interview had taken place. Another youth had said that he knew that Gribble and Smith had arranged to meet at the Kempston Ballast Hole on Sunday afternoon, August 6th. One or two further questions disclosed that the two young men had had some disagreement about the wages which Smith was being paid.

The Chief Inspector then told Gribble that he could produce someone who would be willing to swear that he and Smith had arranged to meet at the Kempston Ballast Hole on that Sunday. Yes, said Gribble, that was true but he had quite forgotten to tell the Chief Inspector about it. He agreed that this was a significant omission, but since there had not been a meeting he did not attach very much importance to it. He admitted that he had gone to the Ballast Hole but his friend did not turn up. He had not heard of him, or seen him, since. The Chief Inspector drew Gribble's attention to the statement he had made earlier, that he had not been to the Ballast Hole for six months. Could he explain this discrepancy? Gribble could not explain it but persisted in his story that he had forgotten to tell the detective anything about Sunday, August 6th.

In the meantime, Dr. Simpson had carried out his post-mortem. The result showed that Smith had been killed with a heavy weapon which was almost certainly made of wood, that he had been standing up and had been hit on the left side of the face and then on the mouth. A third blow had smashed his jaw and knocked him to the ground.

Finally, the fatal blow had been struck on the unconscious man's head.

The body had then been dragged some twenty yards to the place where it had been found. While the Chief Inspector led a team back to the scene of the crime, other detectives carried out inquiries in the district. The caretaker of a church which was near the entrance to the Ballast Hole had seen a bicycle leaning against the wall of his church on the afternoon of Sunday, August 6th. It was still there the next day, and he had taken it to the local police station. As a result of this, the bicycle was now examined by the police, and was identified as the property of Robert Smith. Among the people who were also asked to identify it was Kenneth Gribble, but he was unable to do so.

There was now intense activity at the scene of the crime, where the Chief Inspector directed the team to search for the heavy weapon, probably a wooden one, which had killed Smith. For several days that search was unsuccessful, but on August 21st, a thick, sawn-off bough of a tree was found. It had been well and

deliberately hidden. It was sent to the Metropolitan Police Laboratory where the bloodstained hairs on it were compared with those from Smith's body. They matched, and there was now no doubt that the bough was the fatal weapon.

If further proof were necessary about Smith's association with the Ballast Hole the searching detectives found it. His shoes, jacket, and hat were all discovered in different places. To make certain that there could be no possible doubt, no possible chance that a defending counsel could challenge the accuracy of the case for the prosecution, the shoes and the clothes were identified as those which the dead man had been wearing on Sunday, August 6th.

At this point Gribble was again interviewed by the Chief Inspector. Would he still deny that he had been at the Ballast Hole on the afternoon of August 6th, in the company of Robert Smith? Yes, said Gribble, he would, and what was more he could prove that except for the few minutes which he had waited for the dead man, he had been with a girl. The Chief Inspector made an immediate check and the alibi was proved to be completely false.

Despite the lies, the contradictions, and the evasions there was no conclusive evidence by means of which the Chief Inspector could charge Gribble with the crime. A month passed before the Chief Inspector took any further action. But there are fewer shrewder judges of character than the present Chief Detective Superintendent Peter Beveridge. He had guessed that Gribble would be unable to keep quiet or keep himself under control during that time. Whether it was vanity, or whether it was fright which caused it, the fact was that his conversation during that month was devoted almost exclusively to the killing of Robert Smith. And the more he talked the more did he involve himself in it. True, none of this was evidence, and it could have been no more than macabre enjoyment of the limelight that made him speak so freely to his companions. The Chief Inspector's estimate was that Gribble was in a highly nervous, anxious state.

On September 20th, the firewood merchant's son was interviewed again. After some preliminary bluffing he did just what the Chief Inspector had forecast he would do—confessed to the killing

of Robert Smith at the Ballast Hole on that Sunday afternoon. But he denied that he had murdered him. In his statement, he said that he and Smith had quarrelled about money. According to Gribble, he had told Smith that as he had been stealing money from the wood round, he was sacked. Smith then attacked him, and in defence he picked up a branch of a tree and threw it at Smith. It missed but Gribble then picked it up and hit his opponent. A life and death struggle followed. Gribble, frightened by the violence of Smith's assault, continued to hit him with the piece of wood even when he was unconscious on the ground.

Gribble never varied this story from the time he told it to the Chief Inspector until he was tried for his life at Leicester Assizes. And it proved to be a successful story. After a very long deliberation and in the absence of any witness of the fight, the jury gave him the benefit of the doubt.

Although it never is part of the prosecution's case to prove motive, the lack of one always creates a deep impression on a jury. For that reason the prosecution is happier when it can find a motive. In the case of *Rex v. Gribble* there was no reason at all why Gribble should have murdered Smith. The jury returned a verdict of manslaughter.

A GREAT TRADITION

IT IS NOT mere patriotism that supports Britain's claim that her police and their methods are unsurpassed and a model to the rest of the world. That applies not only to the detective branches but to the police forces as a whole. Their reputation for fairness and impartiality is a by-word. I have given several examples in this book of how the strict application of a very rigid procedure, with the Judges' Rules as their basis, has often frustrated and hampered detectives in their work. Those fateful but vital words "beyond all reasonable doubt" ensure that there is no third degree, no arrest without evidence, and no questioning, except within closely defined limits.

A great fuss is made, and very properly so, when there is a suspicion that a man such as Timothy Evans might have been the victim of a miscarriage of justice. But for the one possible error out of perhaps hundreds of thousands of convictions, there are many more guilty persons who are never brought to justice because the case could not be proved "beyond all reasonable doubt".

But as with so many aspects of that freedom which has made Britain a country of great liberal traditions, the reputation of Britain's police to-day has not been achieved without struggle, opposition, and fights against powerful vested interests.

In Chapter 2 I gave a very brief outline of how London obtained its first detective force, but that was only a small part of the foundation on which the modern tradition has been built.

We can take the growth of the police force in London as an example of how the system has grown throughout most of Britain, since the Metropolitan Police experience has provided the example for most, but not all, of police procedure throughout the country.

It is a remarkable fact that as recently as the early part of the 18th century London had no police force at all, and the rest of the country was similarly deficient. The only opposition to the law-breakers were the parish constables and the town watchmen. The public had little confidence in any of these, and indeed showed it to such an extent that there were locally-organized "private policemen" to supplement the lack of real protection.

Various statutes were passed which attempted to give some sort of authority to the mixed array of anti-criminal forces, but there was no central or common legislation. This archaic and inefficient system, under which highway robbery and almost every type of crime flourished, was made worse by the absence of good stipendiary magistrates or local justices. True, the ancient office of Justice of the Peace was in existence, but the J.P.'s of those days were mostly dishonest, and corrupt, and used their position for gain, profit, and personal privilege.

Gradually, and very slowly, the idea of an organized police force began to grow, but only a few progressively-minded people realized that it should be a civilian force, independent of politics, party governments, or vested interests. There were plenty of supporters for police reform but most of them were prompted by self-interest. If those people had had their way, Britain's first police force would certainly have become a politically-controlled body working for the government of the moment. By the time of the Reform Act of 1832, a state police force might have been a *fait accompli*.

In the meantime, the maintenance of law and order in London was almost as haphazard and as inefficient as it was elsewhere in the country. I showed in Chapter 2 how Thomas de Veil became "the first detective". His appointment, or, more accurately, self-appointment, was characteristic of the haphazard system.

Although de Veil became known as the first detective, and although his criminal hunting took place from his office in Scotland Yard, it was certainly not he who created a tradition of impartiality and integrity. De Veil was a self-seeker, a snob and a corrupt opportunist. He contrived to get himself made a Justice of the Peace, and like nearly all other J.P.'s he became what was

known as a Trading Justice, by selling legal aid only to those who could pay for it. It can be said in de Veil's favour that he was probably less corrupt than his fellow J.P.'s, but only because he was socially ambitious. Although the well-to-do could obtain some sort of hearing (and often acquittal), from de Veil, at least he did not resort to the custom of other J.P.'s of arresting innocent people on faked charges and keeping them in prison (despite the Habeas Corpus Act) until they were able to buy themselves out.

With such social as well as professional ambitions, that sort of conduct would have ruined him socially. To be paid to dispense justice was one thing, and generally accepted, but no gentleman would descend to the false imprisonment racket—and Thomas de Veil, whose parents were Protestant refugees from France—most desperately wanted to be an English gentleman.

As a youth he had left his work as a London apprentice to become a private soldier under the Duke of Marlborough. Hard work, efficiency, and an ingratiating manner with his social superiors led him to a commission. Finally, he retired on half-pay. He soon discovered a method of supplementing this by acting as a self-appointed go-between for people who wanted help from the corrupt Civil Service of those days.

From his office in Scotland Yard he soon found himself involved in seeking out criminals, and the government encouraged this work as an unofficial "thief-taker". With this experience behind him, and making use of his social contacts (many of whom had cause to be grateful to him), he was appointed Justice of the Peace, and set up his office at Bow Street, where there has been a police court and station ever since. To-day, of course, it is the most important court in London, presided over by the Chief Magistrate.

De Veil was an outstanding success. He showed physical as well as moral courage in handling the murderous criminals of the day.

When he left, Bow Street was acknowledged as a permanent centre of what we should now call a stipendiary court, but the chief difference—among many—was that de Veil was policeman, prosecutor and magistrate as well. His force of "thief-takers"—all chosen by him and who were really informers—brought the rogues to his court, and he did the rest.

De Veil was succeeded at Bow Street by two successive magistrates of a very different calibre. They were paid justices. One was Henry Fielding, the novelist, who was also a barrister. He planned a system of armed patrols, but before he could put them on the streets he was succeeded at Bow Street by his half-brother, Sir John Fielding. Not the least remarkable characteristic of this remarkable man was the fact that he was blind, but that did not affect his efficiency.

The Fieldings set a new standard of honesty and integrity, and they set in motion the beginnings of an organized force in London.

The armed patrols—or “Patroles” as they were called—were mounted men armed with pistols, truncheons and cutlasses. The Mounted Branch of the Metropolitan Police to-day is the direct descendant of the Patroles, and is the oldest Branch of the Metropolitan Police.

Although the Fieldings themselves set a new standard of honesty and integrity, the men who worked for them, the “thief-takers”, the Patroles, and, subsequently, the Bow Street Runners, were less idealistic. Poorly paid, they expected rewards from the people they helped, and were ready to overlook an offence or ignore a criminal for similar rewards. Indeed, if anyone wanted the services of a Runner he had to pay a fixed fee, and, in addition, a tip. Nevertheless, they established some sort of reputation and provided an organized resistance to the criminal gangs of the time.

The most important of these men, so far as the making of a police tradition is concerned, were the Runners or, as they were popularly known, the “Robin Redbreasts”, because of the colour of their waistcoats.

In contrast to the Patroles, they were in effect the detective part of the organized police, although they were easily distinguished because of their distinctive dress.

While the Patroles carried out the equivalent of the modern beat-duty in an area within six miles of Charing Cross, the Runners did the investigation and the tracking.

The Patroles and the Runners gradually assumed some control over the criminals, but they were powerless to prevent the highly-prosperous and well-organized crime on the Thames. Night after

night, cargoes were robbed, barges cut adrift and warehouses plundered. Piracy was virtually unchecked along the highway of London River. In one year the West India merchants were said to have lost half a million pounds' worth of cargoes, and it was not only the West India merchants who were suffering. As a form of self-protection they paid for a boat patrol, which was formed by Thames watermen, in gigs. Like the Patroles, they were armed.

Although this river protection force was an extension of the policing system, it was a privately financed venture. It did some outstanding work but suffered from the inevitable weakness of a privately-employed body of men.

This haphazard system of private and semi-official police continued for a number of years, and might have gone on for very much longer but for the Gordon Riots in 1780. They proved to be a highly significant event in the formation of an official, organized police force simply because there were in effect no police to deal with such a situation.

The trouble began as a result of an anti-popery agitation fomented by Lord George Gordon following the repeal of certain anti-Catholic laws; but as is customary with most civil outbreaks of violence, the professional hoodlums and criminals took advantage of it. Uncontrolled mobs carried out wholesale robberies, violence, murder, and arson.

For a fortnight the Capital was at the mercy of criminal gangs. The original "No Popery" protests organized and led by the demented Lord George Gordon were almost forgotten when the pillaging mobs—who neither knew nor cared what the Riots were about—held London to ransom.

The Patroles and the Runners were powerless. They had neither the numerical strength nor any central or official organization, and it was left to the Army to restore law and order. The Bank of England was in jeopardy, and the directors were forced to ask for military protection and the Foot Guards were sent to protect the Bank. There remains a modern link with the Bank's request for protection, for every night the Foot Guards provide a piquet for the Bank's security, and they can be seen marching to their duties from Wellington or Chelsea barracks.

The Riots made a profound impression on the shocked citizens of London. Apart from the casualties in the original rioting, the Army itself accounted for a further 200 killed and many more injured. The Army had certainly done a thorough job, but then, as now, there was a typically British reluctance to use troops for civil disturbances.

This was the opportunity for the supporters of a civilian police force to press their claim. They pointed out that a trained, organized, disciplined police *which had the respect of the public* would have stopped, or even prevented, the riots without bloodshed. A force of Runners, stronger, better-trained, better-organized and respected, could have discovered the preparations for the riot. Again, the troubles might have been avoided if a police force had been ready to control them.

Those people who believed that an unarmed and independent police force was essential were justified as a result of the riots. There was first-hand evidence of the dangers and disasters which were inevitable when the military intervened in civil disorders. Such respect as the public had for its Army in those days—and admittedly it was not very high—was forfeited. A police force as such must derive its authority from the respect which the public hold for it.

But many years were to pass before there was any move towards the establishment of such a force. In the meantime, and as a direct result of the Riots, the patrols were increased and extended their beats—as we should call them to-day—to cover the roads in and out of London. There were gradual improvements in the policing of London, and the citizens were introduced to the idea of a regular police force when the first day patrols appeared on the streets.

The first man to make a determined effort to create a police force was Sir Robert Peel. Even those of us who remember scarcely any history still associate King Alfred with his burnt cakes, Canute with his effort to halt the sea, and Peel as the man who gave us the first “peelers” or “bobbies”. But very few people appreciate that he also gave us the *sort* of force which we have to-day, independent, non-military and non-political. But even Peel

was faced by an insurmountable barrier of opposition from the still strongly-entrenched vested interests. Rogues, rich men, and idealists combined in sympathy, if not in fact, to prevent the formation of an organized civilian police force. The ordinary public was largely indifferent because it did not believe that any such force could be independent, and above sectional interests.

In 1812 Peel became Chief Secretary for Ireland. That storm-centre of political troubles was at that time in much more urgent need of a police force even than England, Wales, and Scotland, and this gave him an opportunity to organize a regular, independent, professional force. It became the Royal Irish Constabulary.

Peel returned from Ireland with a considerable practical experience of creating a police force, and in particularly difficult circumstances at that. Indeed, there was no one in England better qualified to co-ordinate the various progressive ideas and plans for such a force. The formation of the Royal Irish Constabulary had been moderately successful, but there was never any chance that the Irish would respect it, any more than they would respect any body which had authority or power. Also the R.I.C. were armed, and that by itself did not help to create a mutual respect, even if other factors had been favourable.

As Home Secretary, and therefore responsible for London's security, Peel fought hard to establish a regular force for the Capital. But opposition to the idea increased rather than decreased. Because of Peel's association with Ireland and the R.I.C., people in England thought that if he began a similar force in London, it would be a quasi-military body, armed and looking for trouble. In fact, Peel's ideas were precisely the reverse to this, as he was sufficiently realistic to appreciate that what might have been necessary for Ireland, and no one regretted it more than he, was neither necessary nor possible for England.

Nevertheless, there was a very genuine fear that a regular police force would undermine the English idea of freedom of the individual, and that the system was bound to lead to a secret police system with a network of informers. The fact that a guiding hand for the proposed new force was a politician made the idea even less attractive.

Peel persevered, and in the face of bitter opposition in and out of Parliament, he fought his Metropolis Police Improvement Bill through both Houses of Parliament. And on the evening of September 29th, 1829, the first thousand police constables patrolled the London streets.

If there had been difficulties about the formation of such a force they were small compared with running it. The first public reaction to the "bobbies" was one of derision and contempt. Gangs of hooligans followed them on patrol and shouted and jeered at them. The attitude of the general public to the regular police in London can be summed-up by the coroner's jury which returned a verdict of justifiable homicide after a constable had been killed in a disturbance.

But Sir Robert Peel believed in what he had created. He had chosen his men well, and very slowly but quite surely the public began to realise that the London policeman was a man who could be trusted; the rich and powerful were not given special privileges; anyone could stand up in public and criticize the government, the Prime Minister or even the Queen herself, and not be thrust into gaol; and whether a person was white or coloured, Jew or Gentile, the London policeman was there for all.

This took a long time to achieve, but each year saw another link forged in what was to become the unbreakable chain of a British police tradition. Peel's greatest contribution to that was his appointment of the first commanders of his new force, the first of a long line of Commissioners, most of whom have served the force well and have added to its reputation. The newly-formed force had joint Commissioners, Sir Richard Mayne and Sir Charles Rowan, and they shared Peel's ideas and ideals. They were strong men who resisted considerable and powerful pressure from the vested interests. They were ruthless with dishonesty among the constables, and throughout their period of office they saw to it that all recruits to the Metropolitan Police should be from the people themselves. That has remained true ever since, and it was an example that was followed in almost every force in Britain. The policeman lived among the people. To-day, when the housing shortage has brought forth recommendations that married officers should be accom-

modated in flats built specially for the Force, the idea has been strenuously opposed. Few things could do more to loosen the links between police and public than to have the officers removed from day-to-day life.

The first major test to which the new Metropolitan force was put, the first proof of public confidence, came when there were civil disturbances after the Reform Bill of 1832. Tolerance, patience, tact, and public support settled the disturbances without bloodshed. It was an historic and significant period, on which the future success or failure of the Force depended.

For a number of years the Bow Street Runners carried out the detective work, but with the growing strength and efficiency of the Metropolitan Police their day came to an end. As we saw in a previous Chapter, a special detective branch was formed in 1842, and, finally, in 1878, became the Criminal Investigation Department.

The result of all this is that over the years the British policeman, whether he be plain-clothed or uniformed, has the respect of the public. He is the friend of all law-abiding citizens. He goes about his work knowing that the man and woman in the street supports him and will help him if he is in trouble.





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